PLANTING IDEAS • BEAUTIFUL GARDENS • EXPERT ADVICE

GARDENS ILLUSTRATED

The plant issue

Beautiful and experimental
PLANTING IDEAS FROM JIMI BLAKE

The ultimate gardening library
chosen by Tom Stuart-Smith

A first look at Oehme, van Sweden's American Museum garden

What to sow and grow in 2020

BRITAIN'S BEST ORGANIC NURSERIES

9 brilliant beehives

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Editor's letter

Jimi Blake's brilliant, beautiful and experimental garden at Hunting Brook is a quirky mix of foliage and flowers. Hunting Brook is an eight-hectare chunk of up-and-down woodland and meadow carved out from Jimi's family farm in Co. Wicklow where he grows a notable collection of wild-collected plants as well as thrilling combinations of shrubs, trees and perennials.

In this issue Jimi shares four inspirational planting ideas with colour and architecture at the fore that capture the dynamism of Hunting Brook, including a combination of bold-leafed cannas, *Ensete ventricosum* and *Angelica sylvestris* with long-flowering perennials, and a plan combining small trees and woody shrubs, such as *Pseudopanax crassifolius,* with verbascum, kniphofias, agastache and grasses.

Tim Richardson takes the first look at the new garden designed by Oehme, van Sweden for the American Museum & Gardens at Bath. Considered the American voice of the New Perennial Movement, their perspective is a bolder and more robust one than the European look, using a more minimal palette in broad strokes. The garden is based on the concept of a circular walk, inspired by Thomas Jefferson's historic garden at Monticello.

As gardeners we are perhaps more aware than most that small changes can make a big difference. With this in mind, in this issue we highlight the British nurseries that are taking strides towards an organic approach. The benefits of organic methods of gardening when growing things to eat seems obvious, yet choosing organically grown, ornamental plants not only results in a remarkable increase in the biodiversity of our own gardens but is also better for the planet.

I hope you enjoy the issue,

Lucy Bellamy

LUCY BELLAMY, EDITOR

JASON INGRAM

Learn more about Jimi Blake's approach to combining plants at his Hunting Brook Gardens, page 42.

Contents

PLANT SPECIAL 2019

Plants

28 **Insider choice** Ten leading garden experts reveal which plants they are most excited about growing in their gardens in 2020

42 **Landscape luxe** Expert plantsman Jimi Blake explains the secrets behind the beautiful borders he creates at Hunting Brook Gardens

80 **Vive la rose** For award-winning artist Rosie Sanders, the rose is an enduring source of inspiration, as it has been for many artists throughout history

84 **Britain's best organic nurseries** The best of British nurseries embracing more sustainable practices

122 **Peperomia** The small, easy-going houseplant that offers a plethora of foliage textures

Places

34 **Back to the land** Wardington Manor, in Oxfordshire, is the stunning garden in which The Land Gardeners, aka Henrietta Courtauld and Bridget Elworthy, grow the flowers they supply to London's most exclusive florists

56 **An American in Bath** For its first UK commission, the US design firm Oehme, van Sweden has created a New American-style garden in a very British setting

66 **Bright and bountiful** Potter Emma Bridgewater and illustrator Matthew Rice have created a vividly coloured garden around Ham Court their 14th-century former gate house

74 **A fine balance** Ecological consultants Alex Crossman and Jenni Weaver have taken a sustainable approach to creating an harmonious blend of perennial planting and vegetable plot in their Somerset garden

88 **Bold moves** For a modernist house near Melbourne, designer Michael McCoy has created a perennial garden that sits like an island of colour in its Australian landscape

People

50 **Fresh perspective** Artist Toril Brancher's images help us look at the world in minuscule detail, just as a young child might

64 **Who's who** The former head of historic French nursery Vacherot & Lecoufle, Philippe Lecoufle on the pleasures of exhibiting new plants, and why he has no regrets raising orchids rather than racing cars

99 **One man's passion** Designer Tom Stuart-Smith reveals his favourite garden books

Regulars

3 **Editor's letter**

6 **Contributors**

13 **Dig in** This month: news of a new look for a Winter Garden, and the reissue of a classic book

19 **Kitted out** For planning and organising for the year ahead

22 **Subscription offer** Save money when you subscribe to the digital edition of *Gardens Illustrated*

25 **Gardening talent** Meet Marc O'Neill who has swapped fashion design for planting design

26 **The Outsider** Horticulturist Hannah Gardner explores Israel's Negev desert and finds inspiration from a hardy bulb

107 **Design sourcebook** Nine stylish homes for bees

108 **Crossword and how to buy back issues**

110 **What are hardiness ratings?** How to interpret the hardiness ratings found in the magazine

121 **Next issue** What's coming up in January

ANDREW MONTGOMERY

See the plant world anew through the eyes of artist Toril Brancher, page 50.

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SEE PAGE 22

COVER IMAGE

Ham Court by Eva Nemeth

ON THE COVER

What to sow in 2020, page 28
Planting ideas from Jimi Blake, page 42
Oehme, van Sweden's New American Garden, page 56
Britain's best organic nurseries, page 84
Tom Stuart-Smith's gardening library, page 99
Brilliant beehives, page 107

EVENTS AND OFFERS

- Join us for a five-day tour of French rose gardens – page 8
- Learn how to grow crops in pots on our Great Dixter reader day – page 10
- Enjoy an exclusive 20% discount on all flower and vegetable seeds at Sarah Raven – page 113

Our packaging

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The course is led by **Andrew Fisher Tomlin, designer and Chartered Horticulturist,** and we are fortunate to have **leading specialists lecturers** including Neil Lucas of Knoll Gardens, Tony Kirkham from the **Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew** and Nigel Dunnett from the **University of Sheffield.** Designer tutors include James and Helen Basson, Jo Thompson, Ann-Marie Powell, Carolyn Willitts and Amanda Patton.

LONDON COLLEGE OF GARDEN DESIGN

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ANDREW MONTGOMERY

Tom Stuart-Smith
Designer Tom shares his favourite garden book, page 99. *"My library is a little chaotic but much thumbed and a constant source of ideas and inspiration for design."*

JASON INGRAM

Jimi Blake
Plantsman Jimi shares the secrets of the stunning borders he designs at his garden Hunting Brook, page 42. *"Creating complex tapestries with a large palette of plants is my absolute passion."*

CAT LANE

Jane Perrone
Jane hosts the popular houseplant podcast On the Ledge, and this month starts our new houseplant column, page 122. *"It's a total delight to be sharing my passion for growing indoors."*

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ANDREW MONTGOMERY

ANDREW MONTGOMERY

James Basson
James lives in the South of France where he runs Scape Design with his wife Helen, specialising in low-maintenance and dry gardens. He is a fervent advocate for creating sustainable landscapes. The winner of four Chelsea Gold medals, he was awarded Best in Show in 2017.

Fergus Garrett
Fergus was appointed head gardener at Great Dixter by Christopher Lloyd in 1993. He is passionate about passing on his knowledge through student programmes at Dixter and worldwide lectures. He was awarded an RHS Associate of Honour in 2008 and an RHS Victoria Medal of Honour in 2019.

Anna Pavord
Anna's books include her bestseller *The Tulip* and most recently *Landskipping*. For 30 years she was *The Independent*'s gardening correspondent. In 2000 the RHS awarded her the Veitch Memorial Medal. She lives and gardens in Dorset.

Dan Pearson
Dan is one of the UK's best-known garden designers, familiar to many through his gardening columns in the *Observer* magazine. Eight of his gardens, including the Tokachi Millennium Forest in Japan, have won awards and he was awarded Best in Show for his garden at Chelsea in 2015.

Sarah Price
Sarah is one of the UK's most sought-after garden designers who gained worldwide recognition for her designs for the 2012 London Olympic Park. She won Gold at Chelsea in 2012 and 2018, and was GMG Garden Columnist of the Year in 2016 for her design series in *Gardens Illustrated*.

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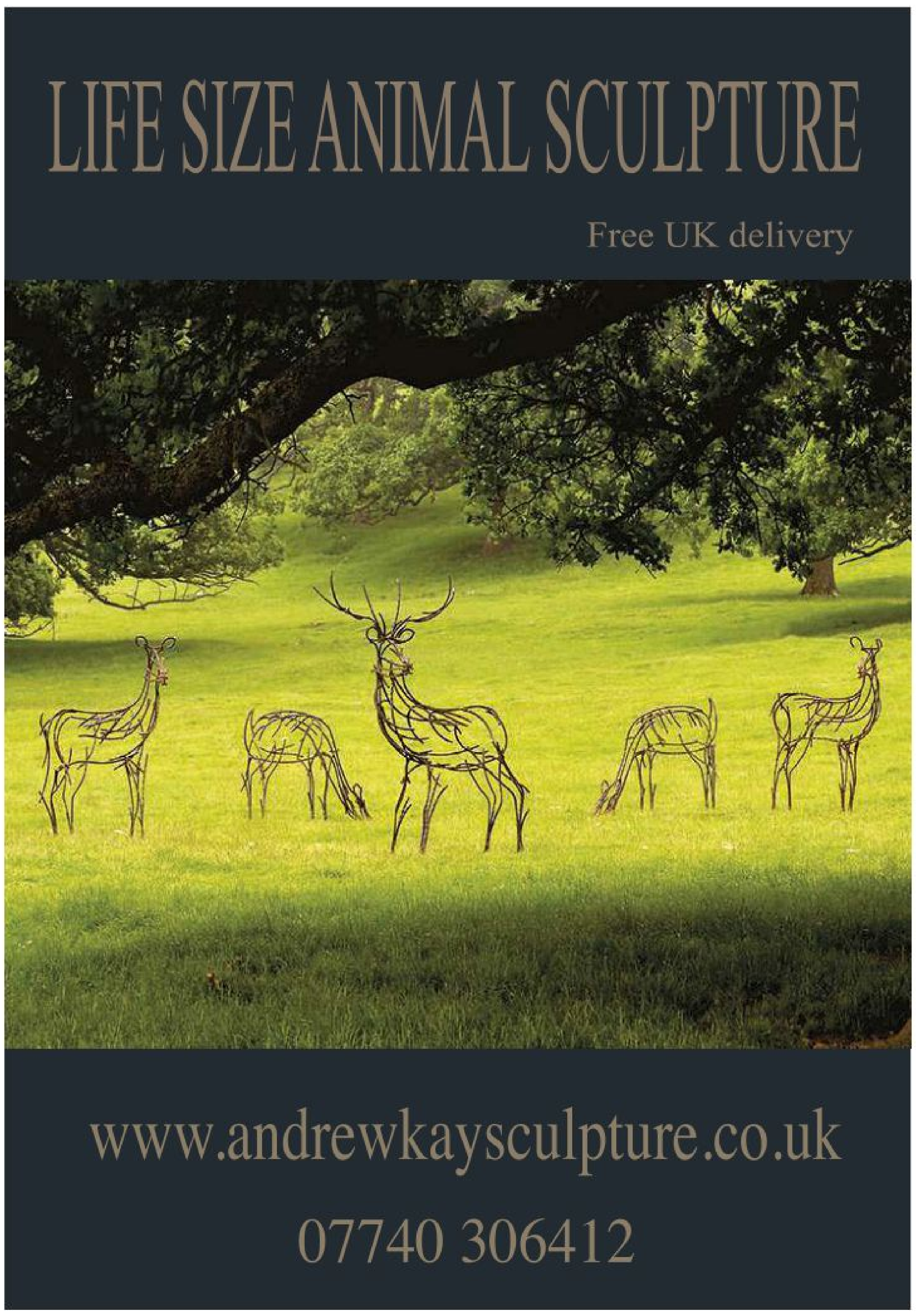

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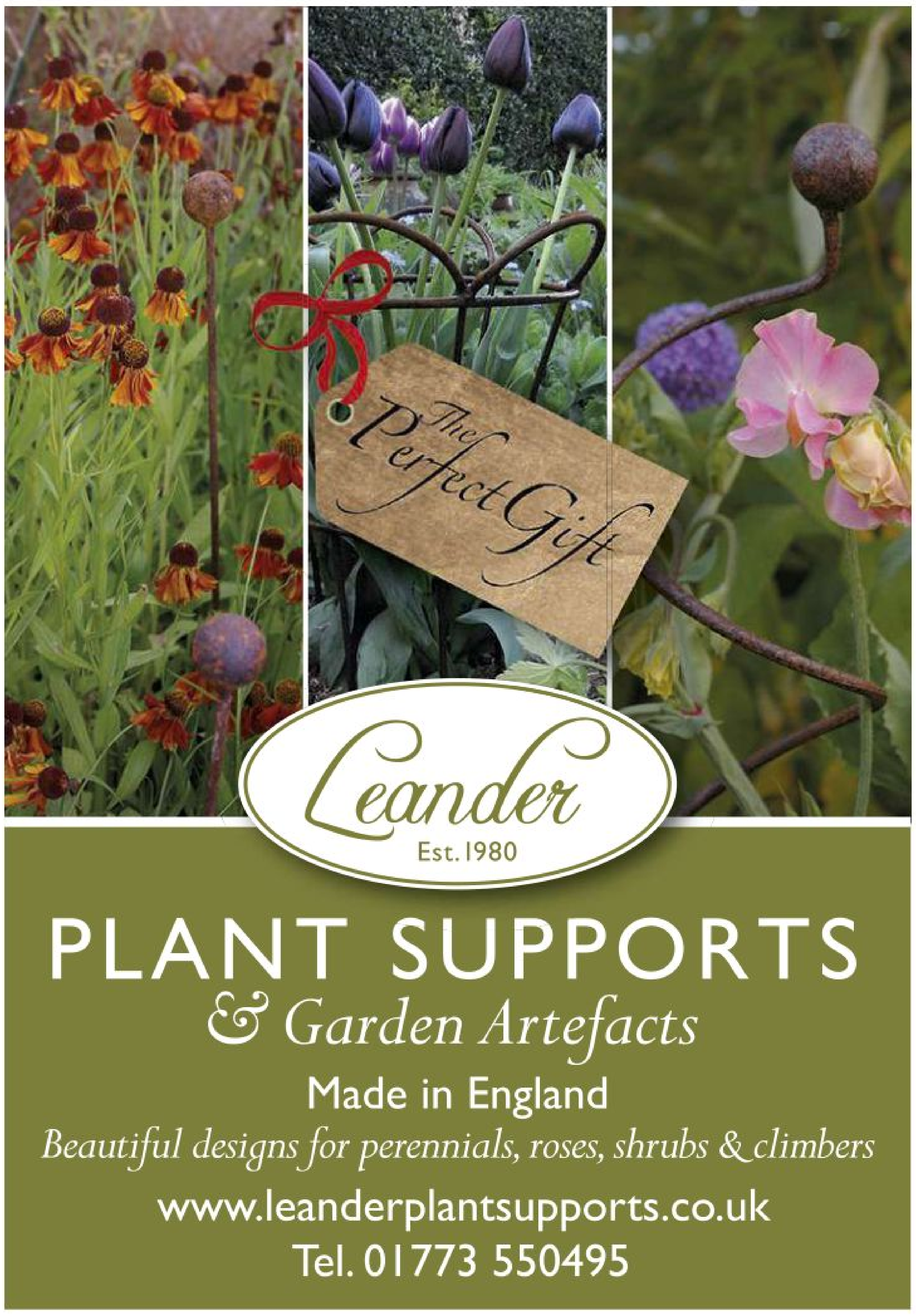

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TOUR LEADERS

Michael Marriott has worked at David Austin Roses, designing and advising, for the past 30 years. He is an expert on all matters relating to roses, from the extensive range of cultivars and type to successful growing.

Maïté Delmas has more than 30 years' experience of managing plant collections (including roses) gained at Kew, Bordeaux and Paris Botanic Gardens. She is an active promoter of the network of Botanic Gardens of France, which she represents throughout the world.

For 2020, our popular rose tour travels over the Channel to investigate the story of the French rose and enjoy some truly wonderful gardens and rose collections. Starting with a visit with the curator of **Roseraie du Val-de-Marne** in L'Haÿ-les-Roses you'll come to understand more about the vast array of French roses and the development of the roses we grow in our gardens today. You will also visit collections of wild roses; a specialist rose nursery producing beautiful new roses each year; a village overflowing with roses; a fairy-tale château where the discerning owner has surrounded her home with sumptuous roses; as well as some intimate private gardens where roses steal the show. This is an unmissable opportunity to stroll from rose to rose discussing the merits of under-planting, mulching, pruning, budding, training, and even 'the name of the rose' in the company of a great rose enthusiast and expert. We will stay one night at **Hôtel Les Pléiades**, in the village of Barbizon before travelling down to the Loire to **Hôtel Le Choiseul** in Amboise. Both hotels offer good food, local wines and convivial Gallic hospitality.

BOOKING DETAILS

Price per person, based on two people sharing is £3,280 (a single supplement of £250 is levied by the hotels).

The price includes: one night with dinner at Hôtel Les Pléiades, Barbizon and three nights at Hôtel Le Choiseul, Amboise, bed & breakfast and dinner with wine included; five lunches; return tickets on Eurostar and all transport during the tour. If you wish to travel independently to join the tour at Paris, Gare du Nord, please deduct £80 and contact the office to discuss joining arrangements. The price does not include extras or travel insurance.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO BOOK PLEASE CONTACT

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website boxwoodtours.co.uk

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JULIAN ELLIOTT; RHETORICAL ANSWER / BOTH ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

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MONDAY 23 MARCH 2020

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Join Aaron Bertelsen, Great Dixter's gardener-cook, to learn the tips and techniques of successfully growing crops in pots

Pots and containers are the mainstay of many gardens when it comes to flower displays or potted herbs near the kitchen door. But with a little planning, you can grow a feast of kitchen garden crops from fruit, such as blueberries, to exotic veg, such as aubergines all in pots and all within a confined space – be it a small courtyard or a compact balcony.

Great Dixter's gardener-cook, Aaron Bertelsen has refined what he grows in a whole selection of containers and is now passing on his experience in a *Gardens Illustrated* reader day at Great Dixter, which will coincide with the publication of his latest book *Growing Fruit & Vegetables in Pots* (published by Phaidon).

On the day you'll learn more about what crops to best grow in pots and tips on cultivation, harvesting and cooking. Whether you are new to grow-your-own and keen to try some different ideas, or a more experienced grower interested to expand the selection of crops you grow to maximise on space, you'll find the day informative and inspiring. Following his workshop, Aaron will serve you a home-cooked lunch, making the most of early season pickings. You'll also have the opportunity to tour Great Dixter's world-famous gardens just as spring emerges into full glory, and buy plants from the nursery at a 10 per cent discount. Aaron will have copies of *Growing Fruit & Vegetables in Pots* to sign and sell to guests on the day.

EVENT DETAILS

Price £85 per person

Date Monday 23 March, 2020.
Venue Great Dixter, Northiam, Rye, East Sussex TN31 6PH.
Programme
10am Arrival and coffee
10.30am Talk with Aaron Bertelsen on growing in pots
12 noon Lunch in the Great Hall
1.30pm Guided tours of Great Dixter gardens
2.45pm Book signing and book sales
3pm Opportunity to visit the Plant Nursery with 10% discount on plants

Tickets and directions will be sent out prior to the event. Places are limited so booking is essential. Please advise us of any dietary requirements or accessibility queries when booking.

TO BOOK

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IMAGES BY ANDREW MONTGOMERY FROM *GROWING FRUIT & VEGETABLES IN POTS* BY AARON BERTELSEN (PHAIDON).

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Dig in

What's happening, where to go, what's in flower and what to buy this month

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Crisp new look

One of the highlights of Anglesey Abbey near Cambridge is its stunning Winter Garden. Planted in 1996 to mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of Anglesey Abbey's former owner and the creator of the gardens, the first Lord Fairhaven, it opened officially in 1998. Since then it has become home to a stunning collection of around 150 plant species chosen for their winter colours and scents, and to one of the largest snowdrop collections in the country. Now, to mark its 21st anniversary, the Winter Garden is getting a fresh new look as the garden team, led by acting head gardener David Jordan, embarks on a three-year project to add new plants along the 450m route. The garden will remain open throughout the project and is always well worth a visit. Anglesey Abbey, Gardens and Lode Mill, Cambridge CB25 9EJ. Open 9.30am-4pm. Tel 01223 810080, **nationaltrust.org.uk**

News

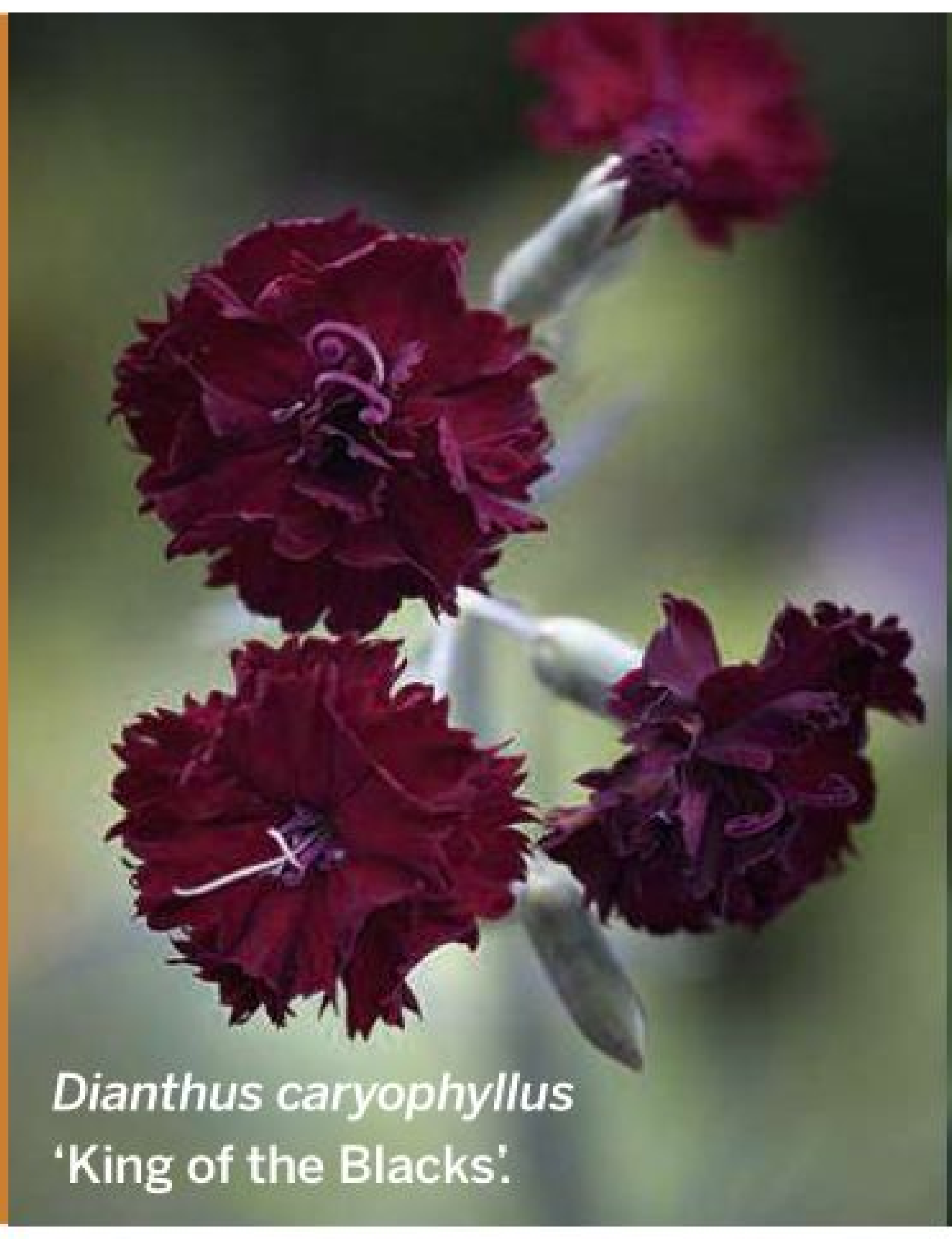
COMPILED BY KATIE DUTTON

Community-focused gardening

Landscape architect, gardener and writer Tom Stuart-Smith has proposed plans for a community garden hub at his home, Serge Hill, in Hertfordshire. Tom and his wife Sue, an expert on gardens and mental health, are funding the Serge Hill Project for Gardening and Health, which aims to provide outreach activities, horticultural education, training and recreation for local people, schools, societies and those with special needs. The scheme is not-for-profit and strives to put people in touch with the soil and with each other. tomstuartsmith.co.uk/about-us

NEW YEAR, NEW COLOURS

Cold winter days always feel like the perfect excuse to settle down in front of a warm fire with a pile of seed catalogues. For those looking for something a little different, Chiltern Seeds has added some exciting new choices to its catalogue. Among the standout plants are the deep-purple carnation *Dianthus caryophyllus* 'King of the Blacks', and the equally sophisticated, dusky pink snapdragon *Antirrhinum majus* 'Chantilly Light Salmon'. chilternseeds.co.uk



Dianthus caryophyllus 'King of the Blacks'.

Antirrhinum majus 'Chantilly Light Salmon'.

New light

The New Year is always a good time to think about bringing a little order to the garden, and the new Hartley 6 Grow & Store from Hartley Botanic is the perfect solution for a small garden where you can't decide whether to opt for a greenhouse or a shed. The new design keeps the traditional style but offers cleaner lines that fit in with a more contemporary garden. The Grow & Store comes in a range of fresh colours, complete with Hartley Botanic's new innovative self-cleaning glass, which uses the forces of nature to help keep glass clean. **hartley-botanic.co.uk**

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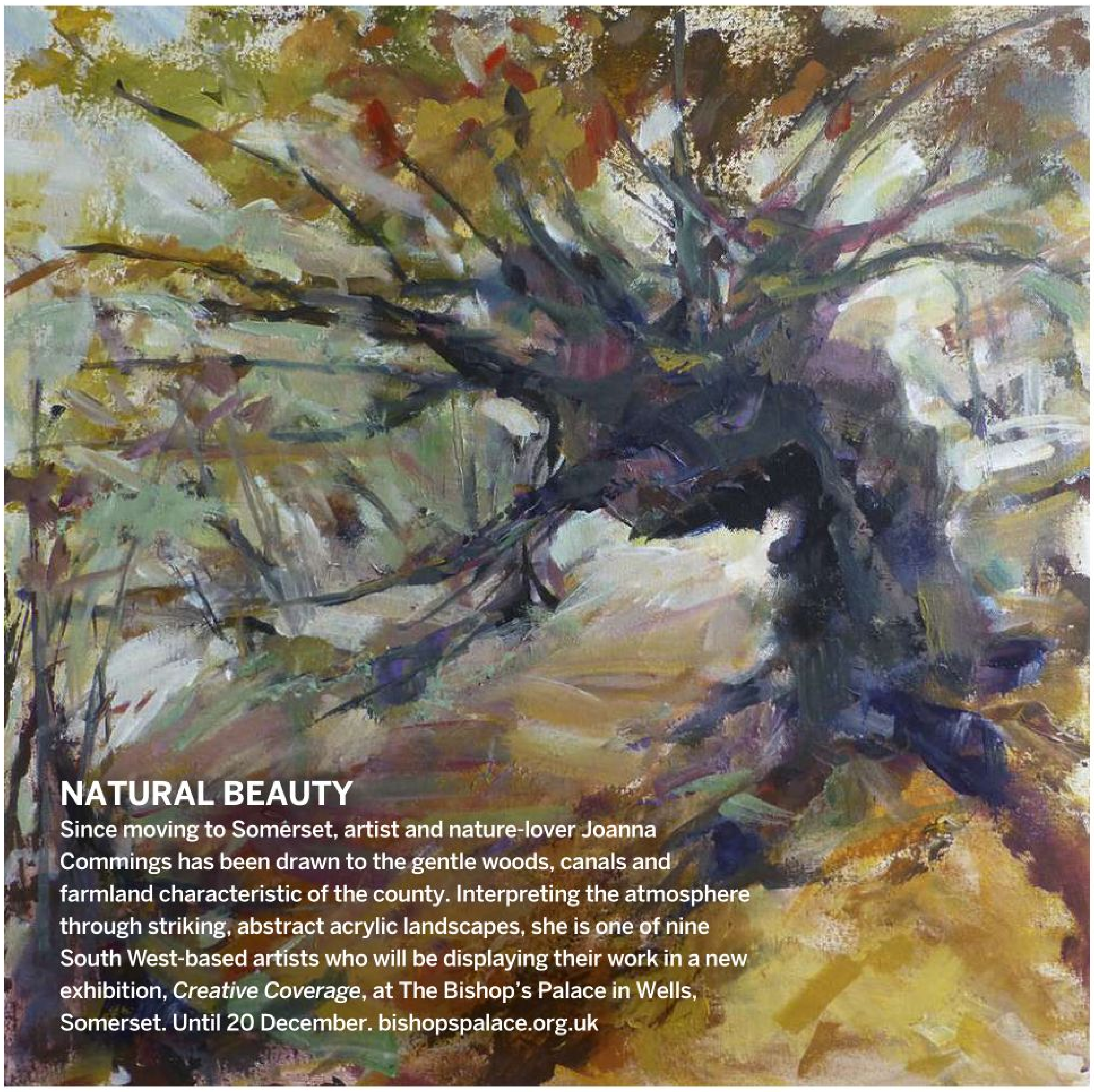


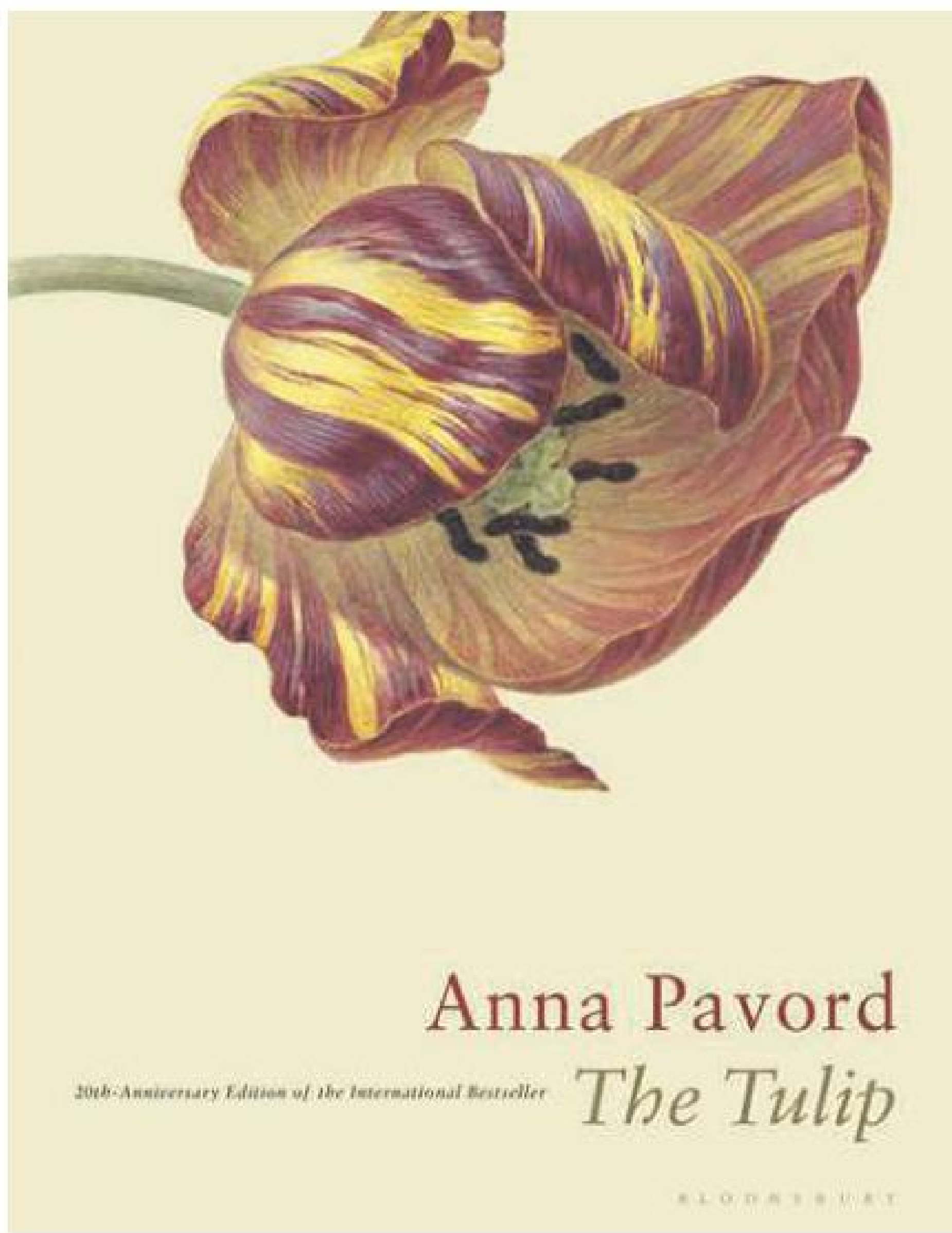
AUTUMN EFFECTS BY JOANNA COMMINGS

NATURAL BEAUTY

Since moving to Somerset, artist and nature-lover Joanna Commings has been drawn to the gentle woods, canals and farmland characteristic of the county. Interpreting the atmosphere through striking, abstract acrylic landscapes, she is one of nine South West-based artists who will be displaying their work in a new exhibition, *Creative Coverage*, at The Bishop's Palace in Wells, Somerset. Until 20 December. bishopspalace.org.uk

A FRESH POT

For those with a taste for the unusual, Suttons' range of houseplants to grow from seed, now includes a chic Urban Cactus Collection, ideal for sunny windowsills, and *Coffea arabica* 'Barista'. This slow-growing coffee plant has luscious green leaves and fragrant, white flowers that are followed by red coffee cherries, the stones of which could even be roasted into coffee beans. Both sets of seeds cost £3.99. **suttons.co.uk**



Floral classic

Twenty years ago Anna Pavord's critically acclaimed book *The Tulip* first hit the shelves. Pavord inspired readers with her engrossing story that follows the tulip's history, from its humble beginnings in Central Asia and eastern Turkey, to its path to success along the Silk Road and its staggering fame throughout Western Europe. Now, to mark the book's anniversary, *The Tulip* has been beautifully updated, with a new preface and revised listings of the best cultivars and tulip species. There is perhaps no other flower quite as political and theatrical as the tulip, and it is thanks to Pavord that we can now call ourselves true tulipomaniacs. *The Tulip* is available from Bloomsbury Publishing, priced £40. **bloomsbury.com/uk**

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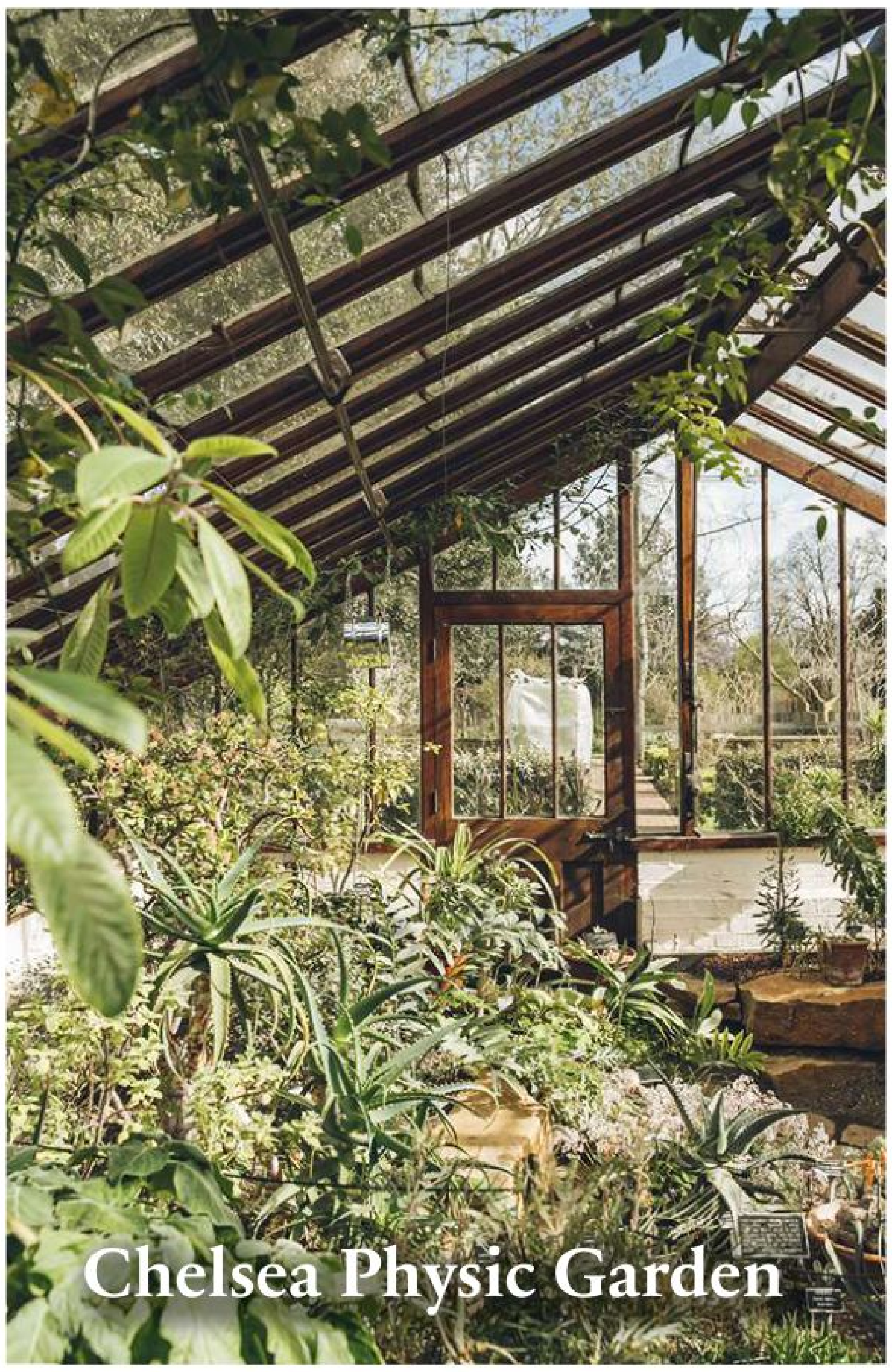

Nestled in the grounds of Magdalene College, **Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum** was originally founded as a physic garden in 1621, to grow plants for medical research. It is one of the oldest scientific gardens in the world and contains over 8,000 species of plants.

Partner Garden

The first record of the West Sussex estate on which Grade II-listed **Borde Hill** sits dates all the way back to 1534, with the garden first planted in 1893 and opened to the public in 1965 upon becoming a charity. The rose garden and impressive collection of champion trees are particular highlights.

Partner Garden

Great Dixter House & Gardens, north of Hastings brings us slightly more up to date: built just before the Great War by Sir Edwin Lutyens by combining an existing 15th-Century building with other bits and bobs, including a similar structure brought over from Kent.

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KITTED OUT

For planning and organising for the year ahead

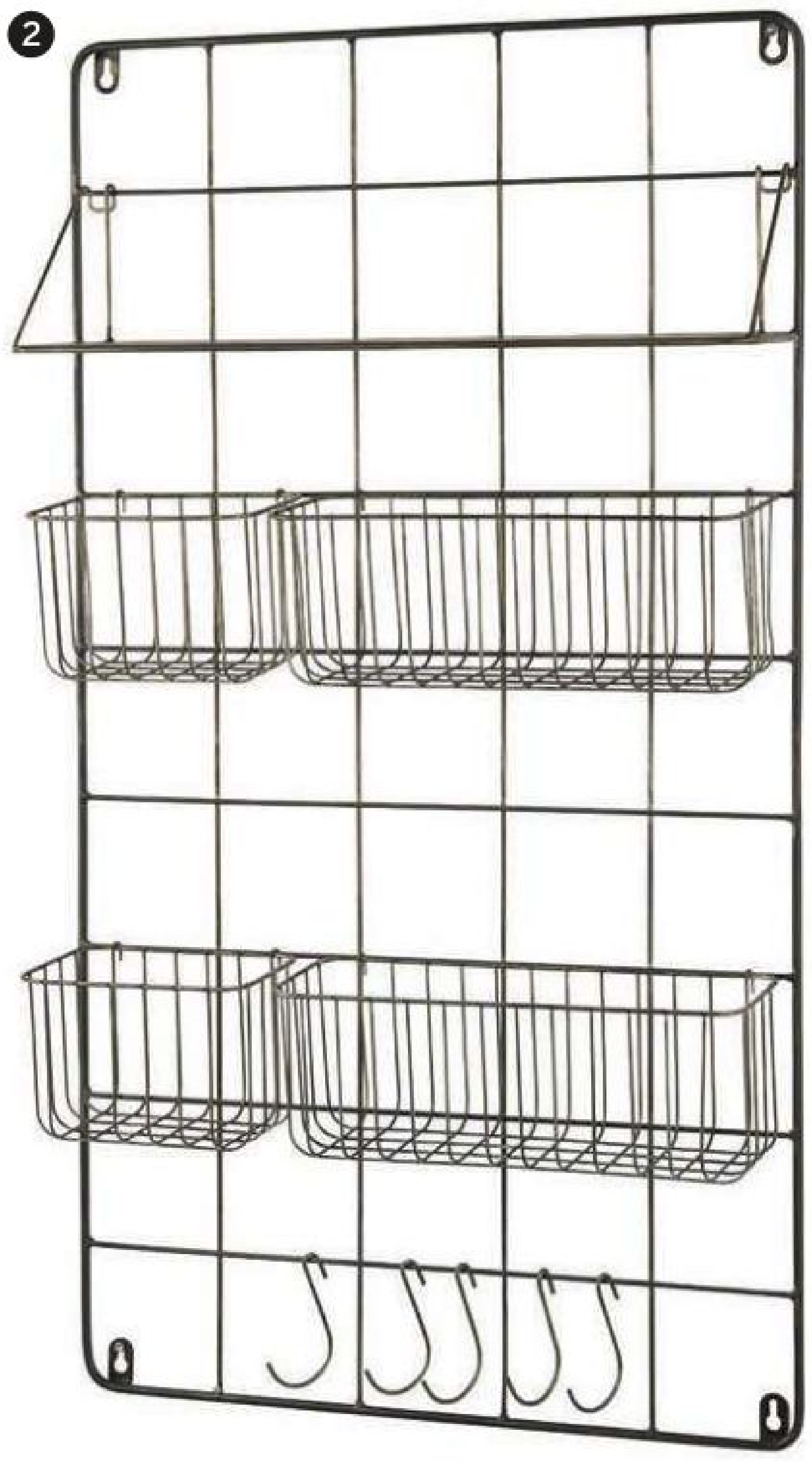
COMPILED BY NIKI GOSS

①

The Waterproof Notebook

MAIN IMAGE (THIS PAGE AND OVERLEAF) BY STEVE SAYERS

❷



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1. Moleskine Gardening Journal, £18.95 and **Weatherproof Notepad,** £14.95, 0345 605 2505, worm.co.uk
2. Industrial Metal Wall Rack, £129.95, 01872 223220, nordichouse.co.uk **3. The Architect Measuring Scale Ruler,** £79, 0344 848 4000, conranshop.co.uk
4. Sneeboer Tool Maintenance Kit, £55.55, 020 7289 6851, clifton.co.uk **5. Slate Plant Tags,** £12 for six, hareandhome.co.uk
6. Twine and Oak Stand, £22, woodandmeadow.com **7. Leather Gauntlet Gloves, black,** £20, 01993 845559, gardentrading.co.uk

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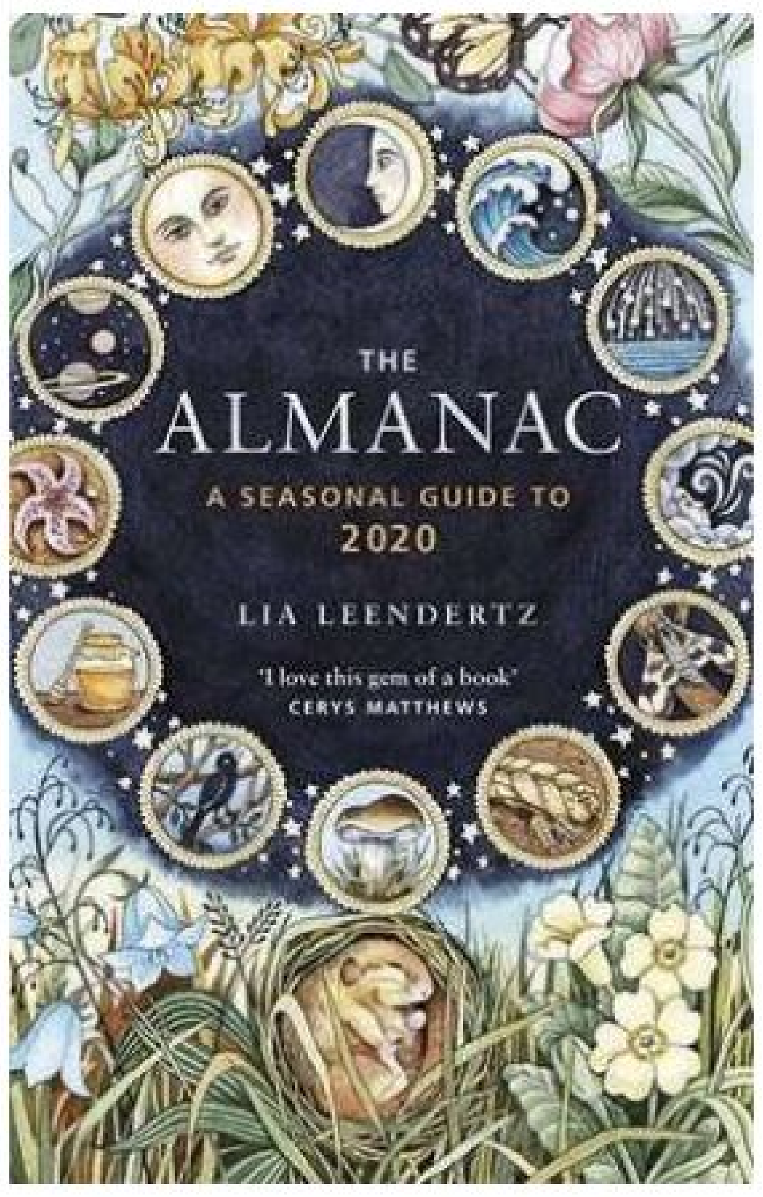
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A SEASONAL GUIDE TO
2020
LIA LEENDERTZ
'I love this gem of a book'
CERYS MATTHEWS

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Seed Packet
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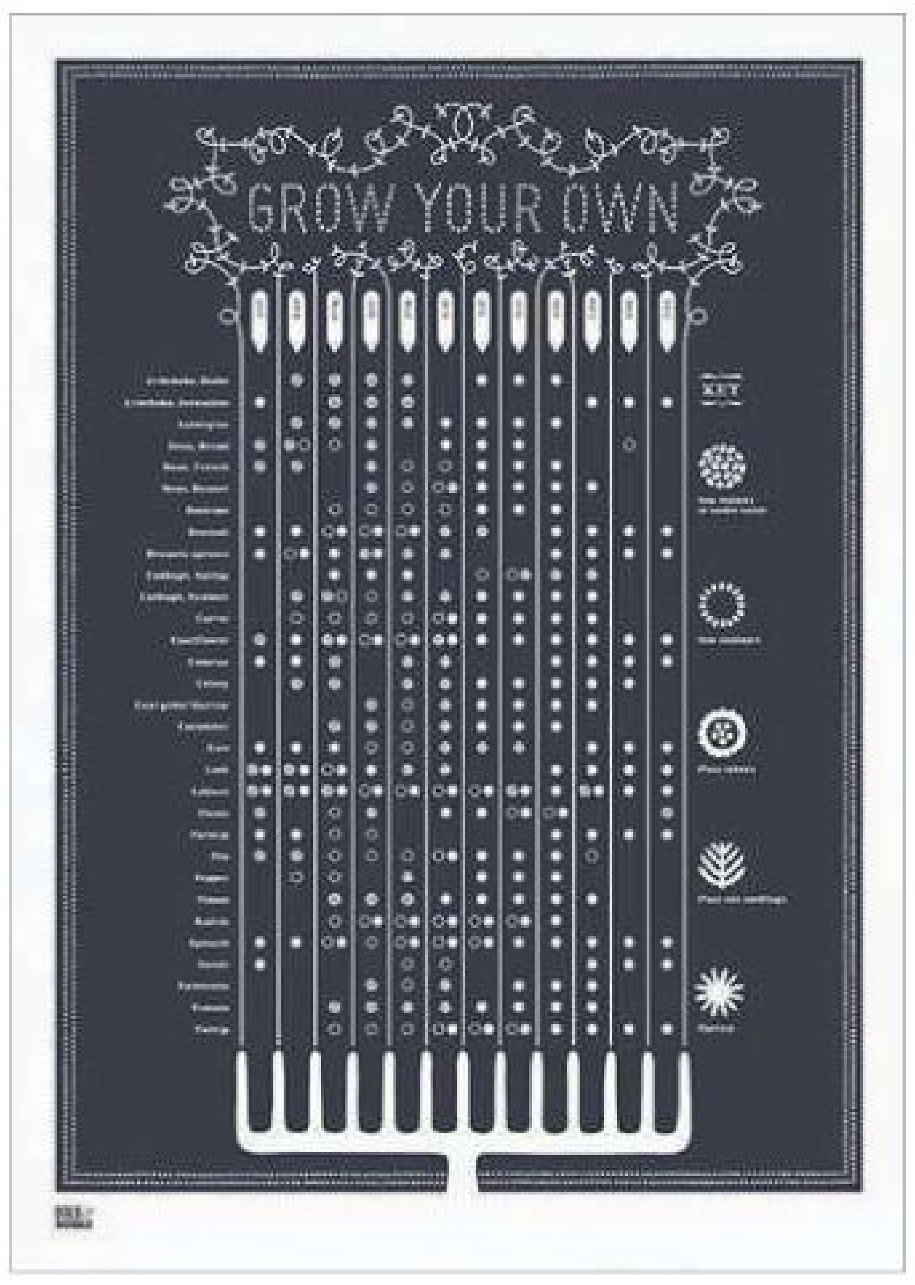
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1. Wrist Rulers, natural leather, £20 each, 020 8940 0999, tribeyarns.com **2. *The Almanac: A Seasonal Guide to 2020* by Lia Leendertz,** £10, blackwells.co.uk **3. Monograph Pencil Set,** £11.50, thepaperparlour.co.uk **4. Leather Handled Seed Packet Storage Tin, Atlantic blue,** £22.99, 0114 233 8262, burgonandball.com **5. Sting In The Tail Recycled Leather Gardening Pouch,** £19.95, trouva.com **6. Camellia Oil,** £7.50, woodandmeadow.com **7. 'Grow Your Own' Planting Calendar Screen Print,** £45, 020 3318 5115, notonthehighstreet.com **8. Canvas Garden Bag,** £15, 01993 845559, gardentrading.co.uk

URGENT APPEAL: help Syrian refugee parents like Khitam to protect their children through the winter.

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Khitam lives with her children, husband Abdelsalam, and his elderly parents in a single, damp room of a half-built apartment block near Tripoli, Lebanon.

“Living here, in these conditions, I cannot keep my children healthy.”

© UNHCR/Hannah Maule-ffinch

© UNHCR/Andrew McConnell

There are holes in the walls and ceiling, and they share a toilet with other refugee families crammed into the building. Khitam and Abdelsalam are mentally and physically exhausted after years of struggling to survive, unable to earn a living and fighting a daily, relentless battle to feed their children.

Right now, they are terrified by the prospect of another winter in their cold, uninsulated single room. Another winter where they will feel every blast of icy wind. Another winter where every time their children cough or sneeze they will fear they have contracted a lethal respiratory condition like pneumonia or tuberculosis.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, needs your support to help parents protect their children this winter.

Please will you give £75 to provide a refugee family like Khitam's with a Winter Survival Kit to protect against the freezing weather?

100mph. Wind speed during Storm Norma, Lebanon, January 2019.

The kit contains essentials such as a heating stove, thermal blankets, warm clothes and a tarpaulin for insulation. It could mean survival for a family like Khitam's.

Two winters ago, as a result of their exposed and unsanitary living conditions, Khitam and all of her children became ill. Baby Bilal had a high temperature and diarrhoea. Her sons Khaled (3, pictured) and Abdul Rahman (8) had chest infections and their sister Fatimah (4) contracted worms. Khitam herself developed painful growths on her throat and lost her voice. Without access to a free healthcare system like we have in the UK, Khitam became overwhelmed with worry about how to pay for the treatment and medicines her children needed.

“I felt helpless. My children were coughing and crying and there was nothing I could do.”

Give £75 to provide a Syrian refugee family with a Winter Survival Kit

Khitam believes that without assistance from UNHCR “my children would be dead”.

Across Lebanon and Jordan, seven of the last eight winters have brought heavy snowfall and temperatures regularly drop below 0°C.

Right now, with the conflict continuing in Syria, 1.7 million refugees in Lebanon and Jordan remain unable to return home. They are living, like Khitam's family, in derelict buildings, or in makeshift shelters made of little more than wood and plastic sheeting. With temperatures falling, the lives of the most vulnerable – young children, pregnant women and the elderly – are at grave risk.

With a gift of £75 you can provide a Winter Survival Kit containing a stove, blankets, warm clothes and a tarpaulin to help a family insulate and heat their home. Please give today – you could save the lives of children like Khitam's.

Give £75. Visit **unhcr.org/wintersupport**
or call **0800 029 3883**

With £75, you can give a Winter Survival Kit containing:

STOVE
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For insulation. Keeps the cold out and the warmth in.

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WARM CLOTHES
Hats, gloves and scarves keep families warm, indoors and out.

Yes, I will help Syrian refugee families survive the winter

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Please accept my gift of: ☐ £75 ☐ £150 ☐ £225 My own choice of £

Please post urgently to: **Freepost UNHCR**. You do not need a stamp.

GIPAWI19A

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(Currently CAF cheques cannot be accepted)

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A first look at Oehme, van Sweden's American Museum garden
What to sow and grow in 2020
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9 brilliant beehives

An American in Bath

For its first UK commission, the US design firm Oehme, van Sweden has created a New American-style garden in a very British setting

INSIDER CHOICE

We asked the experts which plants they are most excited about growing in their gardens in 2020

Landscape luxe

For almost 20 years, plantsman Jimi Blake has been rewriting the rules on combining plants at his Hunting Brook Gardens in Co. Wicklow. Here he shares the secrets of his beautiful borders.

A must-have read for passionate gardeners, *Gardens Illustrated* magazine provides a unique insight into the world's most beautiful gardens, expert advice and planting ideas.

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GARDENING TALENT

Marc O'Neill

Former clothes designer Marc made the move to gardener and planting designer as a way of connecting with the outdoors that is both creative and continually challenging

PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY

First plant love We had an enormous eucalyptus tree in the garden in Enniskerry, Ireland. It was my favourite for climbing, and for scent.

Gardening as a career change Initially, I fell in love with making and designing clothes after learning to cut cloth and make patterns on a summer course in my teens. Gardening came out of years of long hours designing clothes and needing to unwind outdoors in my time off. I soon realised it was a way to continue creating and making, that lasts.

Three worthwhile tips Visit nurseries and plant fairs as often as possible; nursery people work incredibly hard and are always generous with their knowledge. Look at the RHS trials at Wisley and visit people with national collections. Go with your gut instinct when you find a plant that excites you. Don't hesitate to try it. That will keep your planting approach creative and interesting, but make sure you understand where it is from and what it does, or does not need.

Most valuable training Re-learning to look at things properly. Books and screens can help us understand things and influence our ideas, but nothing compares to physically planting and watching combinations emerge and knit together. Textures, tones, light, movement, scent, peaks and lows. I owe a lot to Fergus Garrett at Great Dixter, where I volunteer, and designers Andy Sturgeon and Libby Russell, who I worked with on plant selections, for giving me the opportunity to work with extraordinary planting.

Favourite planting style Shady exotic, and coastal planting styles inspire me currently. Seamless, textured continuity, with confident plant repetition, natural tree forms, and delicate seasonal moments, but with a sense of the unfamiliar. I like planting that feels as if it is creeping in from the surrounding landscape and then elevates strong architecture in honest materials.

How to be more sustainable Be vigilant about planting in the best conditions for that plant, as it avoids waste and can generate free plant stock. I dread to think how much lavender gets planted, killed and thrown away each year from heavy compacted soil getting over watered when the sun comes out.

Most embarrassing moment regarding your obsession with plants I have certainly asked some embarrassing questions with plants people, and that's fine providing I write down the correct answer and don't have that awkward moment again.

Contact marconeill.com **Instagram** @marcfinds

TRAVEL

The Outsider

Horticulturist Hannah Gardner explores Israel's Negev desert in search of the rare desert iris, *Iris petrana*, and is inspired by an exotic-looking, hardy bulb in the lily family

WORDS HANNAH GARDNER ILLUSTRATION ALICE PATTULLO

Desert is the dominant climate zone in Israel. The bedrock of the desert is mostly hard limestone and dolomite, the dry chalky soil starved of water for much of the year. In places vegetation is almost absent, but there are interesting plant populations of Mediterranean, Asian, Saharan and Sudanese origin. The sparse vegetation is mainly found in wadis (dry river beds) and crevices.

Rocks tumble down the slopes after rainfall, the run-off from the larger rocks creating extra pockets of moisture at their base. Desert survivors are mostly geophytes (those with underground storage organs) or annual plants with a speedy lifecycle.

Inspiration for the trip

I'm intrigued by the resilient nature of desert plants and the sophisticated adaptations that enable them to survive, and I wanted to venture into the vast Negev desert to pay homage to the sultry brown *Iris petrana*.

When to go

The desert blooms February to March after the spring rains.

Where to go

The only trees near the Dead Sea, in reality a vast salt lake, are *Phoenix dactylifera*, which produce plump, caramelly medjool dates. In the hills subshrubs congregate near the fallen wadi rocks and boisterous colourful annuals form a semi-transparent matrix between them. Fluffy *Cenchrus ciliaris* grows here and slender, lilac-flowered *Erucaria hispanica*, which can be foraged and eaten. There is papery, statice, blood-red poppy, *Papaver umbonatum*, *Echium judaeum* in cobalt blue and pink and lofty cream spikes of *Reseda alba*. My favourite is *Linaria haelava* – a wispy toadflax, each violet flower marked by a halo of yellow and white. The colours are intensified by the uniformity of the sandy surroundings.

Xerophytic *Anabasis articulata*, a salt-tolerant member of the Amaranthaceae family, is an inconspicuous knobbly grey succulent until it bursts into flower and is smothered in exquisite translucent pink blooms that shimmer in the strong desert light. Small pollinating birds flit between caper-bushes and after some searching I found a lone *Caudanthera sinaica*, an uncommon perennial succulent with ghostly mottled stems. Adding weight to the ethereal haze of flowers were the waxy whorled leaves of autumn-flowering *Drimia maritima*, a tall geophyte once commonly used to mark the margins of pasture by Bedouins.

The green oasis of Ein Gedi Nature Reserve is in the warmest zone in Israel and a good place to see subtropical Sudanian trees that have survived deforestation. The iconic canopy of the umbrella thorn acacia (*Vachellia tortilis*) evokes the Savannah. The *Ziziphus spina-christi* tree grows in wadis or near springs, and is known as Christ's thorn jujube as it's believed to be the tree from which Christ's crown of thorns was made.

Climbing out of the Jordan Valley towards Arad, I spotted a conspicuous stand of impressive, yellow flower spikes. Erupting through the rock-strewn crust of the desert, and standing 60cm tall, the holoparasitic *Cistanche tubulosa* towers over its host plant, the scrappy, white desert broom. The Broomrape is devoid of chlorophyll and obtains all its nutrients and water from parasitising. Later, I also located the smaller dark-burgundy *Cistanche salsa*.

The Negev desert covers over half Israel's land area, it's a kaleidoscopic lunar landscape. The small town of Yeruham at 600m is a good base for exploring the impressive erosion cirques or 'craters' and is close to the Yeruham Iris Nature Reserve, home to the endangered *Iris petrana*, a local endemic and the southernmost of Israel's eight species of Oncocyclus iris. Army bases surround the reserve, but sandy paths intersect the hillside and the vegetation here rewards close observation, although the hundreds of wonderful, showy, dark iris are a little distracting. The fleecy perennial *Salvia lanigera* has adapted to life in the desert, covered in tiny hairs that conserve and capture moisture. Geophytic plants, lovers of sharp drainage and warm arid conditions, are scattered among tangled mounds of *Echiochilon fruticosum*, a pretty perennial herb in the borage family. The glamorous blue Siberian lily, *Ixiolirion tataricum*, and a curious hyacinth relative called *Leopoldia longipes* subsp. *negevensis* caught my eye.

Plant to grow at home

Fritillaria persica is an exotic-looking but hardy bulb in the lily family. Native to Israel and neighbouring countries, it grows on rocky slopes from 700-2,800m and is worth cultivating for its statuesque character (60-90cm) and remarkable, deep-purple flowers that bloom in April. Plant bulbs in the autumn into rich, free-draining soil. Choose a sunny, warm position, grouping bulbs together to achieve more impact, and stay alert to slugs. There are many wonderful recent introductions, *F. persica* 'Bicolor' has flowers in creamy lime and lilac-brown and *F. persica* 'Ivory Bells' has at least 30 flowers on each stem. It makes a seductive cut flower. In the wild they were growing on ungrazed steppe grassland in a military zone at 700m in the southern Judean Mountains. This deserted hillside harboured prolific colonies, the broad, glaucous foliage pronounced amid fine grass and tiny scrambling *Lathyrus gorgoni,* its flowers the same brick red as the terra rossa soil beneath my feet. A vicious squall brought hail, the dusky little flowers hanging face down from the inflorescence trembled violently but remained undamaged by the squall, making them a resilient contenders for a place in a spring garden. □

Guides and maps

flora.org.il/en
wildflowers.co.il/english

Where to stay

Desert Estate Carmey Avdat
Midreshet Ben-Gurion, 84990, Israel.
Tel +972 52 2705328, carmeyavdat.com
Attractive rustic chalets, outdoor bathing and homemade delicacies.

Desert Iris Hotel
108 Zvi Bornstein Street, Yeruham,
80500000, Israel.
Tel +972 8 6300900, d-irus.co.il
Spacious, modern apartments with small gardens.

YERUHAM
Iris Petrana

Becky Crowley
Flower gardener at Chatsworth

TRICYRTIS FORMOSANA

Also known as the toad lily, which is a reference to the spotted markings on the flowers, similar to (but rather more attractive than) the blotchy skin of a toad. We've had *Tricyrtis* plants within a herbaceous border at Chatsworth for years, but the exquisite little flowers tend to get lost among a mass of other plants. They are better enjoyed close up, where you can peer down on to their intricately marked flowers that open up at the very tip of long wiry stems. This makes them a wonderful choice for using in early autumn arrangements and bouquets, where they add a touch of the exotic despite being perfectly hardy in a shady spot in Derbyshire.

Height and spread 80cm x 45cm.
Origin Taiwan and the Ryukyu Islands; a chain of islands that is part of Japan.
Conditions Humus-rich moist soil; shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 4a-9b[†].
Season of interest September – October.

BECKY CROWLEY: PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY; PLANT GILLIAN PLUMMER / GAP PHOTOS.

INSIDER CHOICE

We asked the experts which plants they are most excited about growing in their gardens in 2020

Joshua Sparkes
Head gardener, Forde Abbey

HELIANTHUS GIGANTEUS 'SHEILA'S SUNSHINE'

Tall, elegant, with beautiful buttercream-coloured flowers atop autumnal red stems covered in canoe-shaped, crisp, green leaves. The calyx contrasts wonderfully with the flower, and winter stems and seedheads warrant waiting until spring to cut down. I plan to drift them up to the border's edge to appreciate their beauty.

Height 2m.
Origin Garden origin.
Conditions Reasonable soil; sun or part shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.
Season of interest August – February.

Jack Wallington
Landscape designer

ARAIOSTEGIA HYMENOPHYLLOIDES

Despite its delicate look, this is a tough plant; hardy and evergreen in sheltered spots. It spreads by creeping rhizome above the soil surface to form a clump. I'm planning to move it from a pot into the soil this year, near the base of a shaded raised bed, where I hope it will creep around and up through cracks in the bricks.

Height and spread 40cm x 40cm.
Origin Southeastern Asia.
Conditions Moisture-retentive, humus-rich soil; full shade.
Hardiness RHS H5.
Season of interest Year round.

Steve Edney
Head gardener at The Salutation

ANISODONTEA 'EL RAYO'

A drought-tolerant, semi-evergreen shrub that flowers almost 365 days of the year. It has a light, airy habit with lobed, hairy, mid-green leaves and saucer-shaped, pink flowers that deepen to the centre. The shade of pink deepens in the winter at which time surprisingly the flowering increases. Looks fabulous when paired with *Salvia* 'Amistad'.

Height and spread 2m x 1m.
Origin South Africa.
Conditions Free-draining soil; sun.
Hardiness RHS H2.
Season of interest Year round.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.

JOSHUA SPARKES PORTRAIT: RICHARD BLOOM, PLANT: RICHARD BLOOM / GAP PHOTOS;
JACK WALLINGTON PLANT: SARAH CUTTLE / GAP PHOTOS;
STEVE EDNEY PORTRAIT: ANDREW MONTGOMERY, PLANT: JONATHAN BUCKLEY / GAP PHOTOS

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One of our most popular courses, led by master horticulturist Ben Pope, which aims to take each student through all the practical elements of caring for a garden from soil, tools, maintenance, seed sowing and propagating, weed control and pests and diseases. The first 3 days will be spent at the Chelsea Physic Garden and the final day will be spent gaining practical experience in Rosemary Alexander's much praised garden near Petersfield and the garden nearby, where Ben is in charge. Participants will be given a chance to prune, plant, sow seeds and regular maintenance tasks will be discussed. A light lunch and refreshments will be provided daily.

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Covers the best in planting design while training in the more serious aspects of horticultural techniques. Practical sessions are held at Arundel Castle under the guidance of head gardener Martin Duncan and at Sandhill Farm House, Rogate. Lectures by many leading gardening personalities and regular visits to outstanding private gardens. Students also learn to draw up planting plans.
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Garden of Medicinal Plants – Chelsea Physic Garden Photo: R Alexander

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Nigel Dunnett
Prof Planting Design
and Urban Horticulture,
University of Sheffield

SALVIA NUTANS

Upright branching dark stems rise from a clump of grey-green leaves. Stems are topped by hanging clusters of intense blue flowers, pointing arrow-like towards the ground. It's a plant of the Russian steppe, where it can grow in large colonies, and this gives a clue to how I'm going to use it: in dry meadow plantings, where the salvia flowers can dance above a matrix of tussocky grasses.

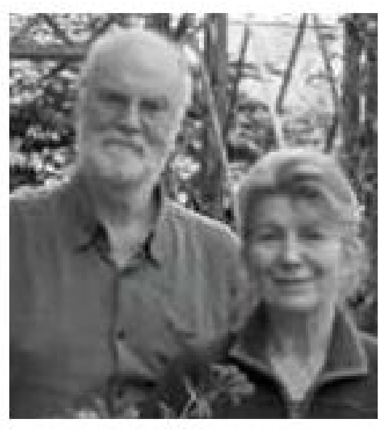
Height and spread 1.2m x 45cm.
Origin Russia and Eastern Europe.
Conditions Sun, free-draining soil, dry.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 4a-9b.
Season of interest June – September.

Flora Starkey
Floral designer

LATHYRUS SATIVUS F. AZUREUS

I've grown this beautiful sweet pea for the past few years and always look forward to the appearance of its dainty, sky-blue flowers every summer. The delicacy of its form and the purity of its colour make it one of my absolute favourites. A few graceful stems will lift and transform any floral arrangement with ease.

Height 1m.
Origins Bulgaria and Balkans.
Conditions Grows in a wide range of soil types; full sun.
Hardiness RHS H4.
Season of interest June – August.



Elizabeth and Alasdair MacGregor
Jointly run Elizabeth
MacGregor Nursery

GERANIUM 'DARK EYES'

The combination of dark foliage and bright-magenta flowers has been really eye-catching in our trials field for several seasons, so we are really looking forward to offering it for sale from spring next year and using it in our own blue-purple border alonside *Iris* 'Shirley Pope' and *Iris chrysographes* 'Mandarin Purple'.

Height 60cm.
Origin Our own raising (*G. pratense* 'Victor Reiter' x *G. psilostemon*).
Conditions Any fertile garden soil; sun or part shade.
Hardiness RHS H7.
Season of interest From early summer.

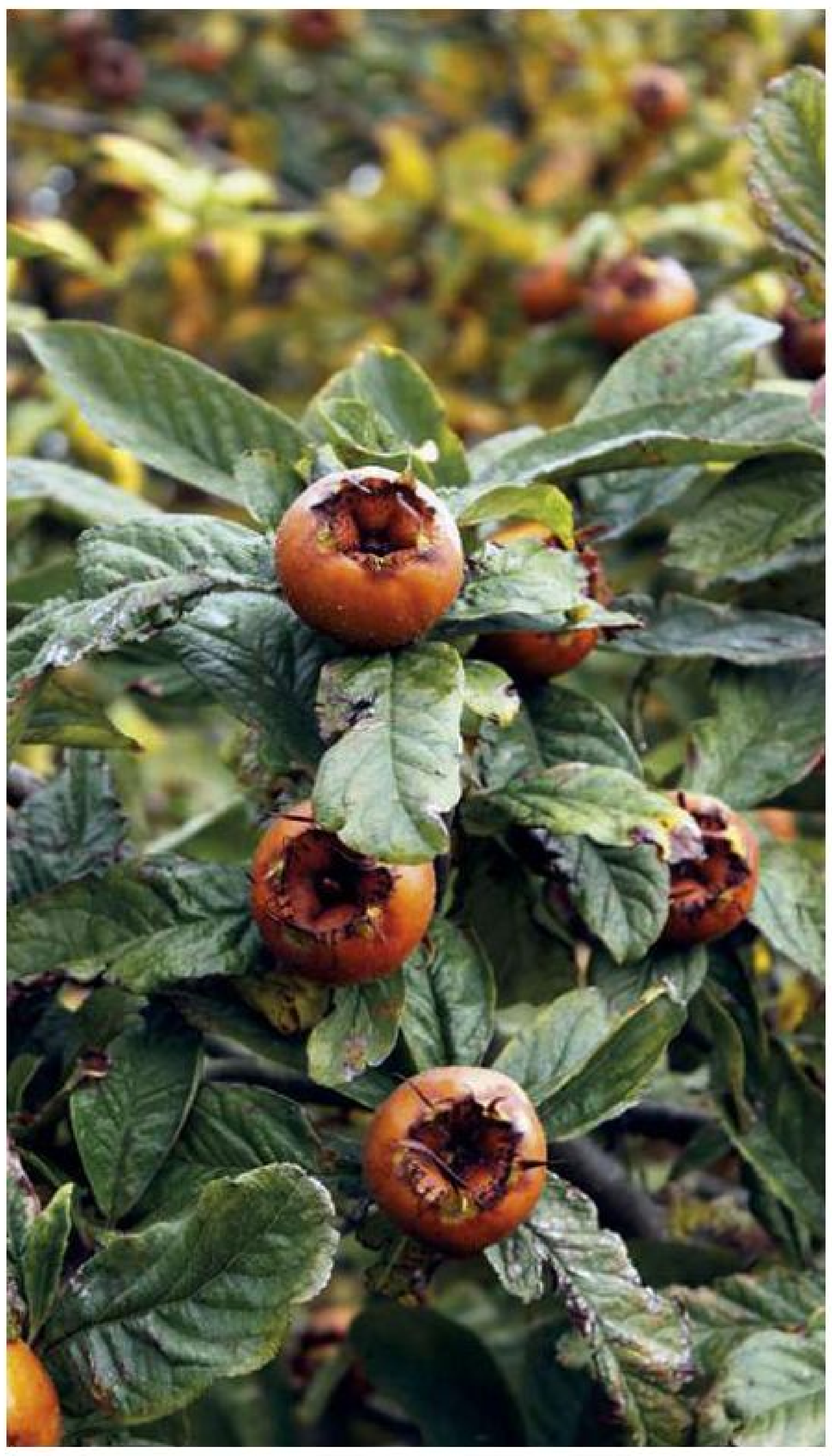
NIGEL DUNNETT PLANT: RICHARD BLOOM;
FLORA STARKEY PLANT: TIM GAINEY / GAP PHOTOS;
ELIZABETH AND ALASDAIR MACGREGOR PLANT: A&E MACGREGOR

FURTHER DETAILS

How to find the plants chosen by our plantspeople – and more about their work

If you would like to grow any of these recommended plants, check which nurseries have stock in the annual publication *RHS Plant Finder,* or via the website apps.rhs.org.uk/horticulturaldatabase/index.asp

- **Becky Crowley** is tasked with growing flowers for the house and estate at Chatsworth. It's a task she relishes, sharing her enthusiasm through social media and regular tours and talks. She's also a talented photographer, selling her own botanical images via her Etsy shop. chatsworth.org, @beckycrowley_
- **Joshua Sparkes** is head gardener at Forde Abbey on the Dorset/Somerset border. In his work to reinvigorate the planting, he is also introducing more sustainable and ecological approaches to soil and plant health. fordeabbey.co.uk, @joshua_sparkes,
- Landscape designer **Jack Wallington** works and designs in London but has a wide field of interest when writing his column for the *Telegraph*. He has also just written his first book *Wild About Weeds* encouraging us to see the botanical and ecological worth in including weeds in our plant choices. jackwallington.com, @jackwallingtongarden design
- **Steve Edney** is head gardener at The Salutation in Kent, and on the team of trials judges with the RHS. His display at RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2019 highlighted the diversity and interest of seedheads left standing after flowering to extend the season of interest.▷



Benjamin William Pope
Head gardener in
a private garden

MESPILUS GERMANICA 'NOTTINGHAM'

Healthy in growth, this medlar produces simple white flowers in spring followed by unusual fruit, somewhere between a large rosehip and quince. Leathery green leaves take on buttery autumn tints as fruits begin to ripen, although they will not give up their toffee-apple flavour until bletted. Well worth a spot in any garden. AGM*.

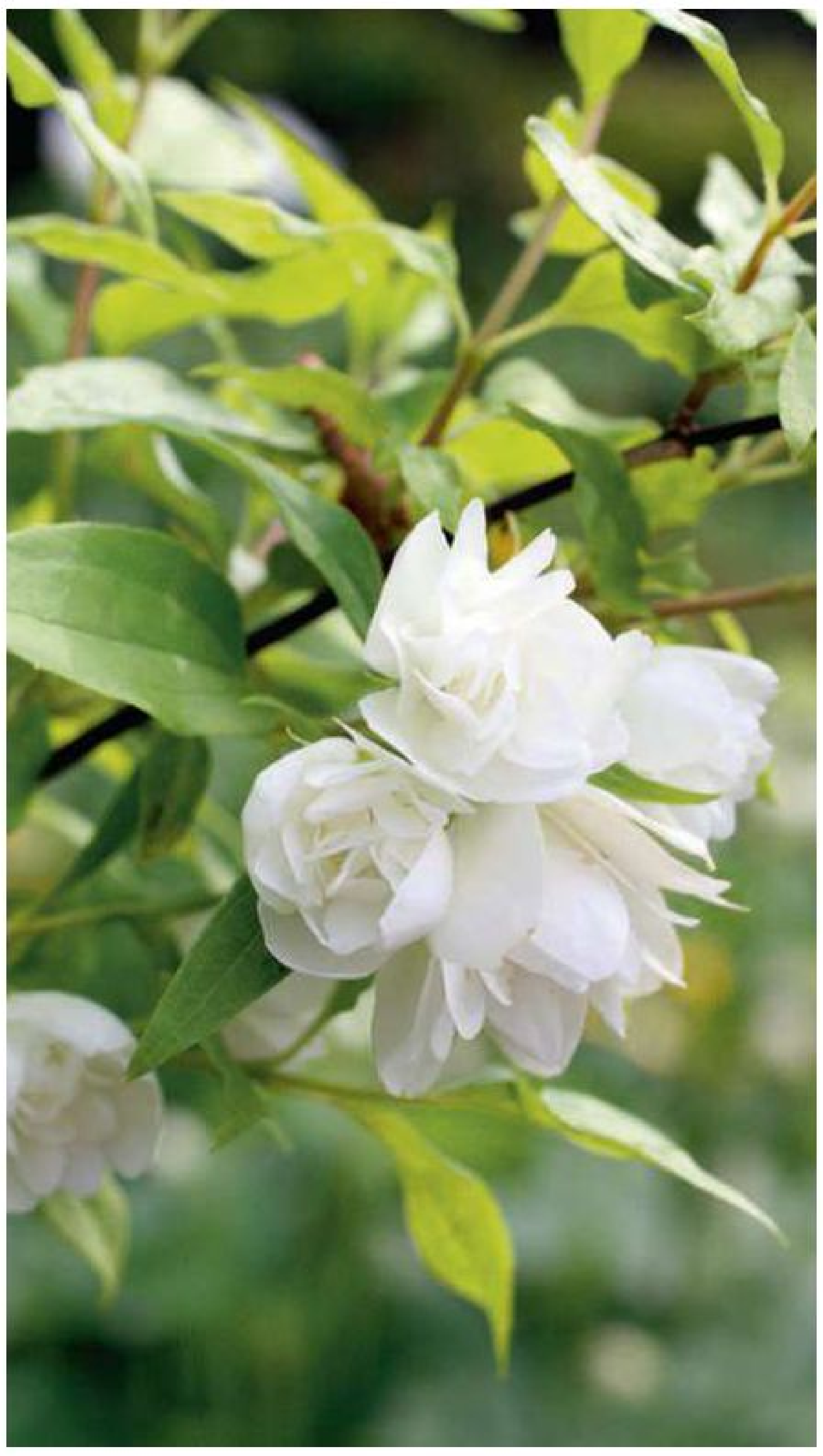
Height 4-6m.
Origin Southwest Asia, Transcaucasus.
Conditions Free-draining soil; full sun.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 5a-8b.
Season of interest Spring and autumn with culinary benefit.

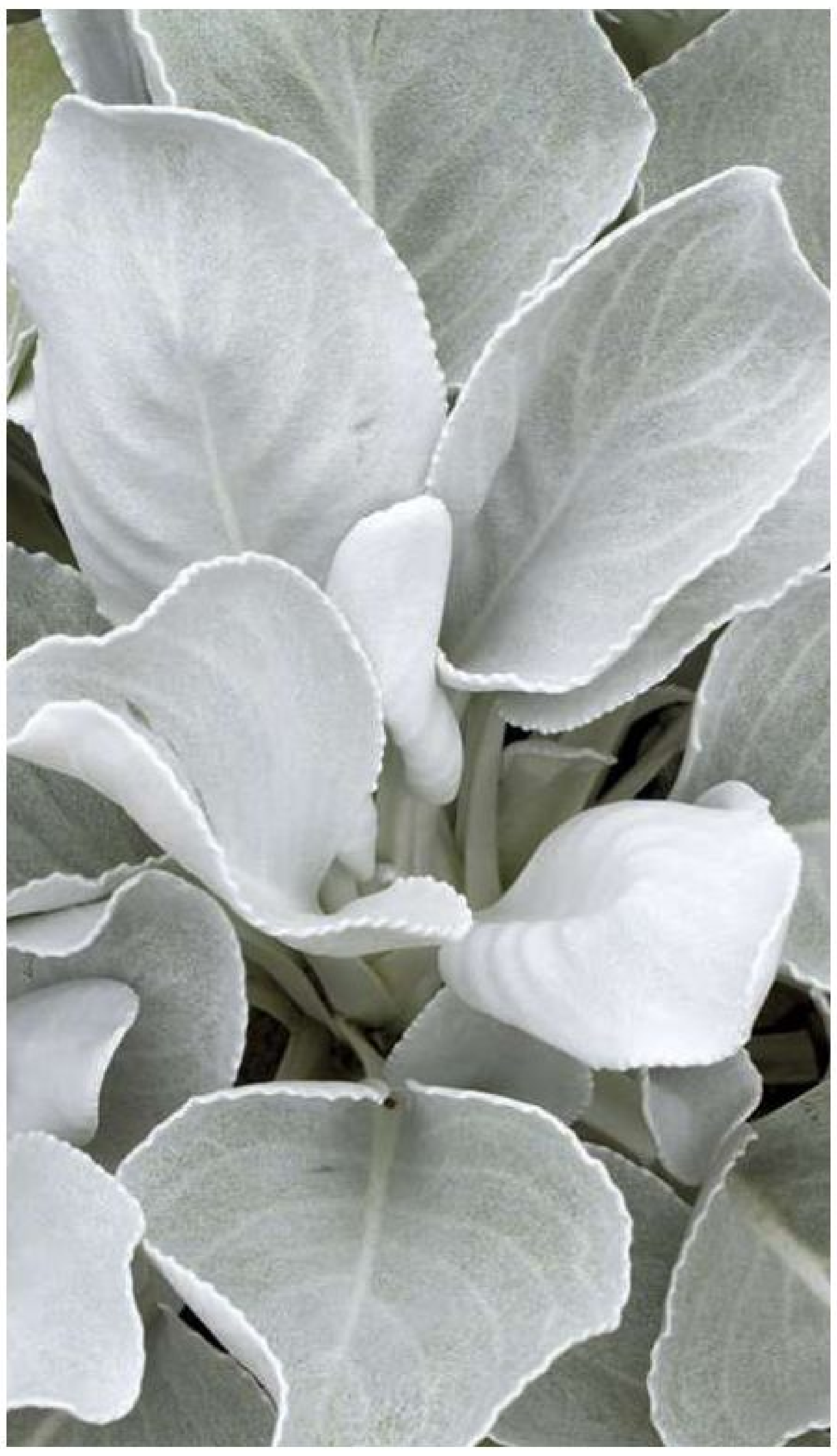
Alexander Hoyle
Plantsman and designer

PHILADELPHUS 'MANTEAU D'HERMINE'

Philadelphus, with their profusion of white, richly fragrant blooms, always makes me think of heady summer evenings, and there is one suitable for every garden. Their slightly arching stems are also beautiful used as a cut flower. Albeit a bred cultivar, I love *P.* 'Manteau d'Hermine' with its double flowers. AGM.

Height 50cm-1m.
Origin. Bred by French plantsman Victor Lemoine (species northeast Mexico).
Conditions Full sun to partial shade.
Hardiness RHS H6.
Season of interest June to July.





Matthew Pottage
Curator of
RHS Garden Wisley

SENECIO CANDIDANS ANGEL WINGS (= 'SENAW')

I thought this would be difficult to please, probably needing mountain-like conditions – drainage, moisture, high light levels etc – to thrive. But then I clocked it on a friend's Twitter feed, growing in Ireland to a mound some 50cm high and wider still. It's hard to think of another plant with such presence.

Height 40cm.
Origin Falkland Islands, South America.
Conditions Free-draining, moderately fertile soil; full sun.
Hardiness RHS H3.
Season of interest Year round.

▷ the-salutation.com, @stevenedney4

- **Nigel Dunnett** is renowned for his immersive, diverse planting in what he describes as 'low-input, high impact' schemes for gardens and public spaces. nigeldunnett.com, @nigel.dunnett
- **Flora Starkey** is a floral designer working with a list of high-profile clients. Based in London, she also has a farm on the Devon-Dorset border where she grows supplies of foliage and flowers. florastarkey.com, @florastarkey
- **Elizabeth and Alasdair MacGregor** run a small nursery in Scotland, focused on the best, garden-worthy perennials. They are renowned for spotting and developing new cultivars, including the featured *Geranium* 'Dark Eyes', which will be available from their nursery from spring. Ellenbank, Tongland Road, Kirkcudbright DG6 4UU. Tel 01557 330620, elizabeth macgregornursery.co.uk
- Based at a private, Arne Maynard-designed garden in Sussex, head gardener **Benjamin William Pope** created stylish planting combinations for our Pots of Style series in 2019 and is now focused on developing his own market garden. theworkinggarden.com, @theworkinggarden
- **Alexander Hoyle** is a Kew-trained plantsman and garden designer developing planting schemes for projects, including terraces, courtyards, town gardens and larger country gardens in the UK and Tangiers. alexanderhoyle.co.uk, @alexander.hoyle
- **Matthew Pottage** is the RHS's youngest curator, heading up the flagship gardens of Wisley in Surrey and is now tasked with having an overview of the current period of transformation, including developments to the entrance, trials beds and new National Centre for Horticultural Science and Learning. rhs,org.uk, @matthew_pottage

BENJAMIN WILLIAM POPE PORTRAIT: ANDREW MONTGOMERY, PLANT BRIAN HOFFMAN / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO;
ALEXANDER HOYLE PLANT: MARTIN HUGHES-JONES / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO;
MATTHEW POTTAGE PLANT: BIOSPHOTO / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

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Back to the land

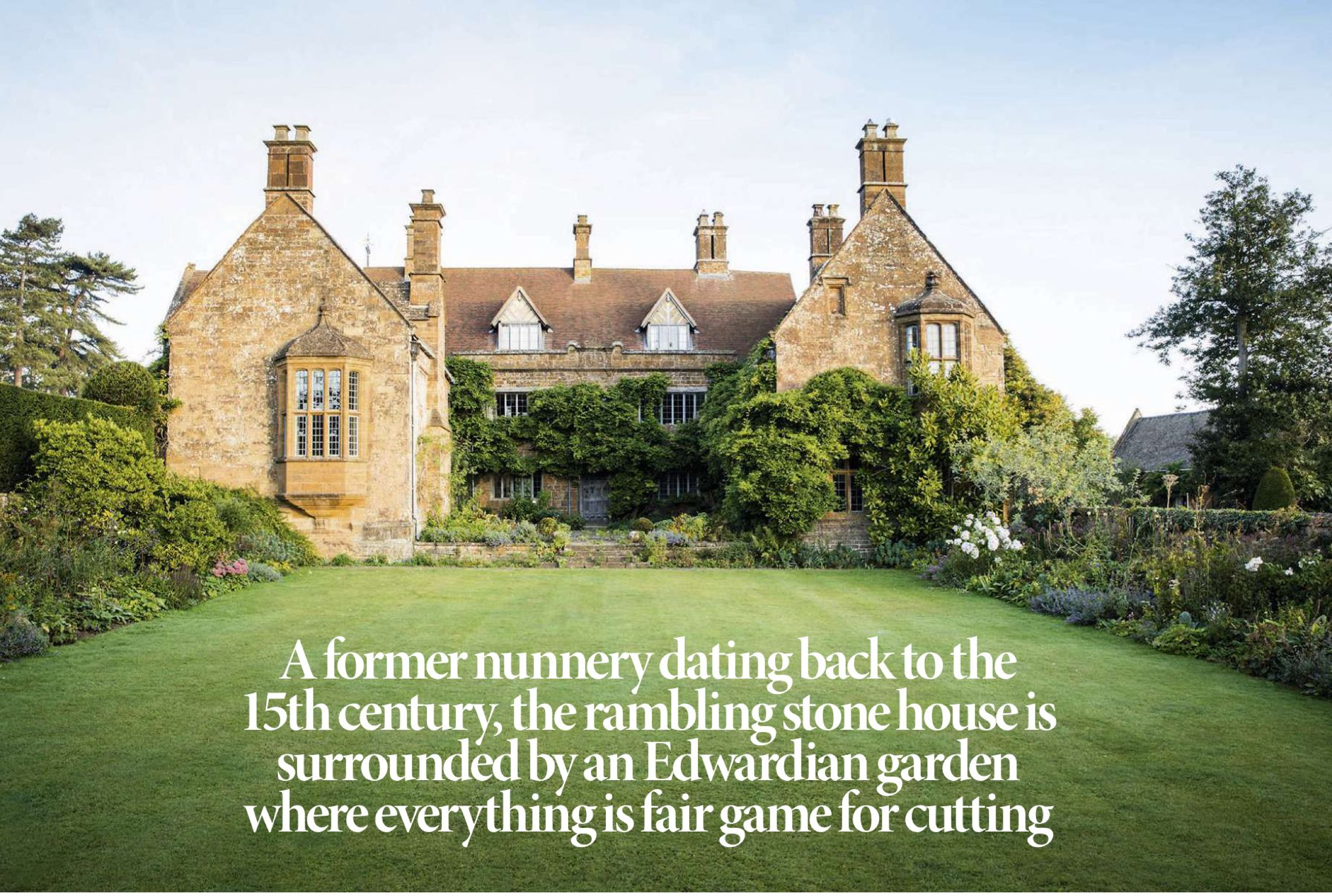
Growers, designers and soil enthusiasts, The Land Gardeners are part of a small army of suppliers to London's most exclusive florists

WORDS **KENDRA WILSON** PHOTOGRAPHS **CLAIRE TAKACS**

IN BRIEF

Name Wardington Manor.
What Original Arts and Crafts garden around a much older house.
Where North Oxfordshire.
Size Six acres.
Soil Rich, friable loam.
Climate Temperate, English midlands.
Hardiness zone USDA 8b.

This growing area was created to meet demand for The Land Gardeners' flamboyant cut flowers. In the adjacent orchard, grass is allowed to grow long over the season.



A former nunnery dating back to the 15th century, the rambling stone house is surrounded by an Edwardian garden where everything is fair game for cutting

There was a time when ladies in tweed would pull up outside the West End premises of florists Constance Spry or Pulbrook & Gould to unload sizeable branches of blossom, sprays of berries and superlative home-grown flowers. They supplied freshly snipped vignettes of mid-century country life, before bowing out with the age of convenience. Thankfully, a small army of growers are doing it again, although The Land Gardeners have swapped tweed for navy cotton drill.

Henrietta Courtauld and Bridget Elworthy – garden designers, growers, flower decorators and now compost manufacturers – are both modern and traditional, owing more to their doughty forbears than they could have realised in 2012 when they first came into being. Although they are partly based at a small design studio in Henrietta's London garden, the raw materials for their floristry business come from Bridget's home, Wardington Manor in north Oxfordshire. A former nunnery dating back to the 15th century, the rambling stone house is surrounded by an Edwardian garden where everything is fair game for cutting.

The borders in and around the Arts and Crafts design of yew enclosures and topiary were originally planted, more than 100 years ago, with cutting in mind. From the library windows, lines of *Iris pallida* underplanted with *Scilla* frame the narrow lawn, like rills of clear blue. They are picked in spring. Old borders dedicated to delphiniums, acanthus or snowdrops are all picked. An unusual seam of acidic soil has allowed twisted old magnolias to thrive along a jungly path with rhododendrons, camellias and azaleas. These are 'live pruned' – cut when in bud or blossom – and taken to events.

"It's almost as if the garden demands it," says Bridget Elworthy, who has lived here since 2008. At first she was unaware that the manor was surrounded by a large cutting garden, planted for purpose by the first Lady Wardington and continued by her daughter-in-law Audrey. Having supplied the most exclusive florists herself, the second Lady Wardington expressed amazement at Bridget and Henrietta's plans to follow suit. Why would they want to bother, swimming against the tide of progress? The answer is in the name: The Land Gardeners have always wanted to get back to the land, the earth and the soil.

When Bridget moved to Wardington, the walled garden was no longer productive and a dedicated cutting garden across the street had been let as allotments. Both had miraculously good soil, as did the whole garden, having been worked for almost six centuries. The old cutting garden is bordered by a slope

To continue turn to page 40 ▷

Above The Bottom Lawn can be seen from the street, where tall gates separate the main garden from the cutting garden over the road. Built around 1450 as a nunnery, Wardington has evolved over the years, with a pair of oriel windows added at the turn of the last century.

Above right The Land Gardeners put in new borders at Wardington for the exclusive use of dahlias, tulips and soon: peonies. Although the beds are frequently plundered for cut flowers, they maintain blocks of colour for about eight months of the year.

Right Clear lines of *Iris pallida* and yew complement the textured old walls, before looser perennials take over as the season progresses. These include cosmos, scabious, asparagus and aster. All is available for cutting, including *Wisteria sinensis* by the house.

In the walled garden, earth is never left uncovered for long. As the season draws to a close, green manures are sown in harvested areas, while compacted soil is broad-forked and covered in compost for the dormant months. A diverse mix of flowers and vegetables attract a wealth of invertebrates above and below ground.

HOW TO HELP THE CLIMATE BY LOOKING AFTER YOUR SOIL

Pulling carbon out of the air and into the ground can be as simple as improving a plant's rate of photosynthesis. A healthy plant is supported around its roots by vast communities of microbes and fungi, which feed the plant with minerals in exchange for a photosynthesis by-product, carbon sugars. It pays to optimise this natural coexistence; the more efficiently the micro-organisms are working, the more carbon will be taken out of the atmosphere and sequestered into the ground.

Adding homemade compost or sowing green manures over exposed ground helps the soil to retain carbon. Weeds also protect soil and add diversity, both above and below ground. Monocultures encourage pathogens: even with a lawn, soil health will be improved by spreading compost over it and allowing for clover and daisies. Mowing less frequently and allowing grass to grow longer will encourage deeper root systems, supporting richer microbial life while aiding water retention.

The borders in and around the Arts and Crafts design of yew enclosures were originally planted more than 100 years ago with cutting in mind

▷ of cottages, and is set out in practical rows, while the original walled garden plan has been re-instated. Tulips are followed by cosmos, and dahlias mingle with an increasing number of vegetables.

Microbes are never far from The Land Gardeners' thoughts. "The soil acts as the stomach of a plant," says Henrietta. "The roots go down into the soil and release sugar for the microbes. They in turn take minerals from the soil and exchange them, in a plant-available form." In other words, microbially rich soil produces plants of amazing vitality. "We need to look after the creatures underneath the ground as much as those above," says Bridget. "We are almost farming those microbes."

Aeration and hydration are important in keeping the microbes (as well as all the other symbiotic organisms, including fungi about which we know surprisingly little) happy, so digging, except in extreme cases of compaction, is avoided. Instead they use a broad fork which lifts the soil. "Normally we layer compost on the soil, which we might have broad-forked, just to aerate it," says Bridget. "We're not turning the soil. We plant the width of the broad fork, with small paths in between for walking on." When a crop is harvested, green manures cover the ground. Henrietta: "We are covering the soil all the time. We dig the green manure in before it flowers but sometimes we leave it because it's too irresistible – and bees love it."

In processing their own green waste and digging deeper into the physics of compost, it has become clear that soil health should be vital to the planet's health. "We don't need more carbon in the atmosphere but we really need it in the soil," says Henrietta. "Years of ploughing have released it upwards." Carbon is naturally taken out of the air through photosynthesis but compost-making can add hugely to a 'carbon sink' effect through careful preparation on a domestic or grand scale. The Land Gardeners call their own version, manufactured with the aid of a neighbouring farm, Climate Compost.

Soil is a business for The Land Gardeners. In the same way, the garden at Wardington is a business, which is why they are reluctant to disappoint garden groups looking for perfection. Weeds are allowed to increase biodiversity above the ground and among the micro-organisms below the ground. As Bridget says, quoting environmental economist Dieter Helm: "Where there's mess, there's life." □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Find out more about The Land Gardeners at **thelandgardeners.com**

Above Crisp outlines of yew, forming walls and entrances, were implemented at least 100 years ago. With the garden's solid structure, flower borders that are spent in terms of cutting, are allowed to romp and go to seed.

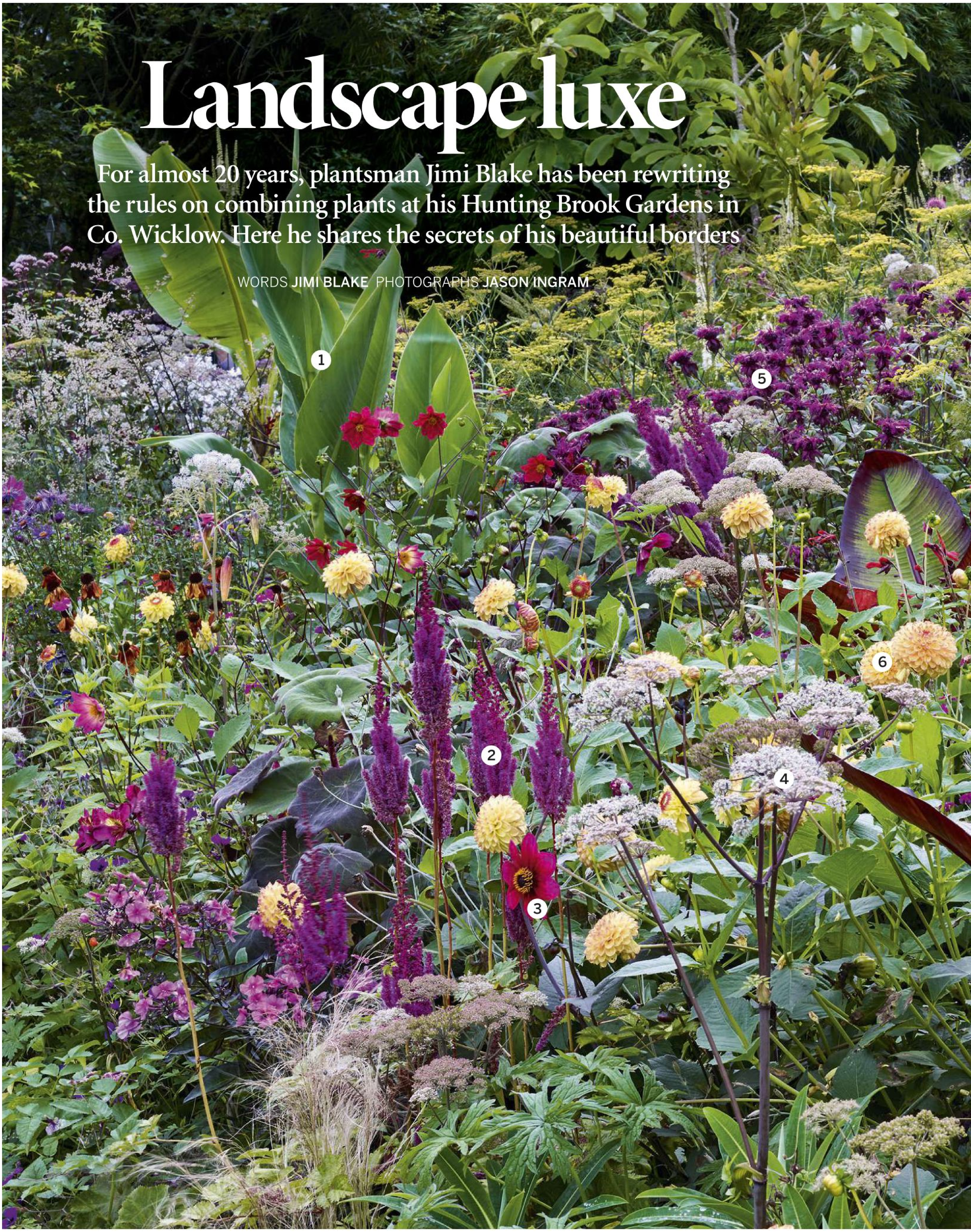
Above right The Top Lawn is a former tennis court. This year, grass was left to grow long around the outlines, allowing violets, lady's bedstraw, yarrow and ox-eye daisies to make themselves known. They were joined by self-seeders that drifted over from the borders.

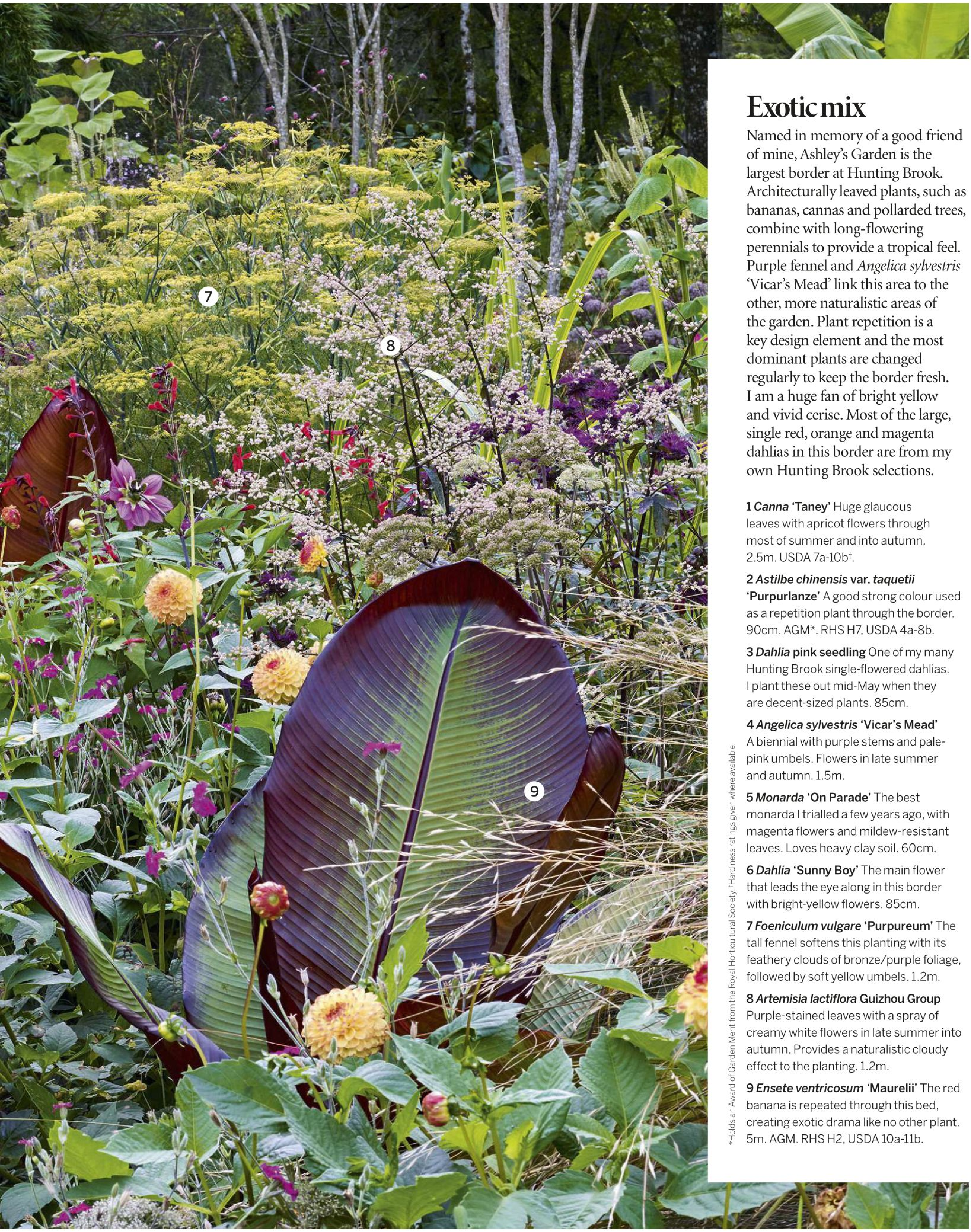
Right Long grass on the Top Lawn was cut down in time for the village fête in September. On the other side of the lawn, flower beds are divided by old buttresses of yew, reinforcing the perpendicular layers of an Arts and Crafts layout.

Landscape luxe

For almost 20 years, plantsman Jimi Blake has been rewriting the rules on combining plants at his Hunting Brook Gardens in Co. Wicklow. Here he shares the secrets of his beautiful borders

WORDS **JIMI BLAKE** PHOTOGRAPHS **JASON INGRAM**





Exotic mix

Named in memory of a good friend of mine, Ashley's Garden is the largest border at Hunting Brook. Architecturally leaved plants, such as bananas, cannas and pollarded trees, combine with long-flowering perennials to provide a tropical feel. Purple fennel and *Angelica sylvestris* 'Vicar's Mead' link this area to the other, more naturalistic areas of the garden. Plant repetition is a key design element and the most dominant plants are changed regularly to keep the border fresh. I am a huge fan of bright yellow and vivid cerise. Most of the large, single red, orange and magenta dahlias in this border are from my own Hunting Brook selections.

1 *Canna* 'Taney' Huge glaucous leaves with apricot flowers through most of summer and into autumn. 2.5m. USDA 7a-10b[†].

2 *Astilbe chinensis* var. *taquetii* 'Purpurlanze' A good strong colour used as a repetition plant through the border. 90cm. AGM*. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

3 *Dahlia* pink seedling One of my many Hunting Brook single-flowered dahlias. I plant these out mid-May when they are decent-sized plants. 85cm.

4 *Angelica sylvestris* 'Vicar's Mead' A biennial with purple stems and pale-pink umbels. Flowers in late summer and autumn. 1.5m.

5 *Monarda* 'On Parade' The best monarda I trialled a few years ago, with magenta flowers and mildew-resistant leaves. Loves heavy clay soil. 60cm.

6 *Dahlia* 'Sunny Boy' The main flower that leads the eye along in this border with bright-yellow flowers. 85cm.

7 *Foeniculum vulgare* 'Purpureum' The tall fennel softens this planting with its feathery clouds of bronze/purple foliage, followed by soft yellow umbels. 1.2m.

8 *Artemisia lactiflora* Guizhou Group Purple-stained leaves with a spray of creamy white flowers in late summer into autumn. Provides a naturalistic cloudy effect to the planting. 1.2m.

9 *Ensete ventricosum* 'Maurelii' The red banana is repeated through this bed, creating exotic drama like no other plant. 5m. AGM. RHS H2, USDA 10a-11b.

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*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. [†]Hardiness ratings given where available.

Colour code

This large, sloping area with free-draining soil and full sun was extended, redesigned and planted this spring. The planting design is a tapestry of low, see-through plants planted up with *Calendula* 'Zeolights' and *Tagetes* 'Cinnabar' weaving through the bed. Planting these annuals at regular intervals across the whole area creates a summer spectacle and they make wonderful cut flowers. Complementary silver plants bring an extra dimension to the scheme and for this I use *Anaphalis triplinervis* 'Sommerschnee', *Stachys byzantina* 'Big Ears' and *Ozothamnus rosmarinifolius* 'Silver Jubilee'. Rising above are the architectural spiky flowers of various eryngiums. The main eryngiums that I use are the wonderful *E. guatemalense*, with its nearly black flowers, and *E. yuccifolium* with its yucca-like leaves. Additional softer spires of *Linaria purpurea* 'Poached Egg' and the mauve and pink *Linaria* 'Dial Park' are also woven through the planting scheme and I have noted over the years that these are particularly popular with local insects and pollinators.

1 ***Eryngium guatemalense*** A hardy perennial and one of my top five perennials this year. It has large, spiny, black flowers with silver bracts on strong stems. 90cm.

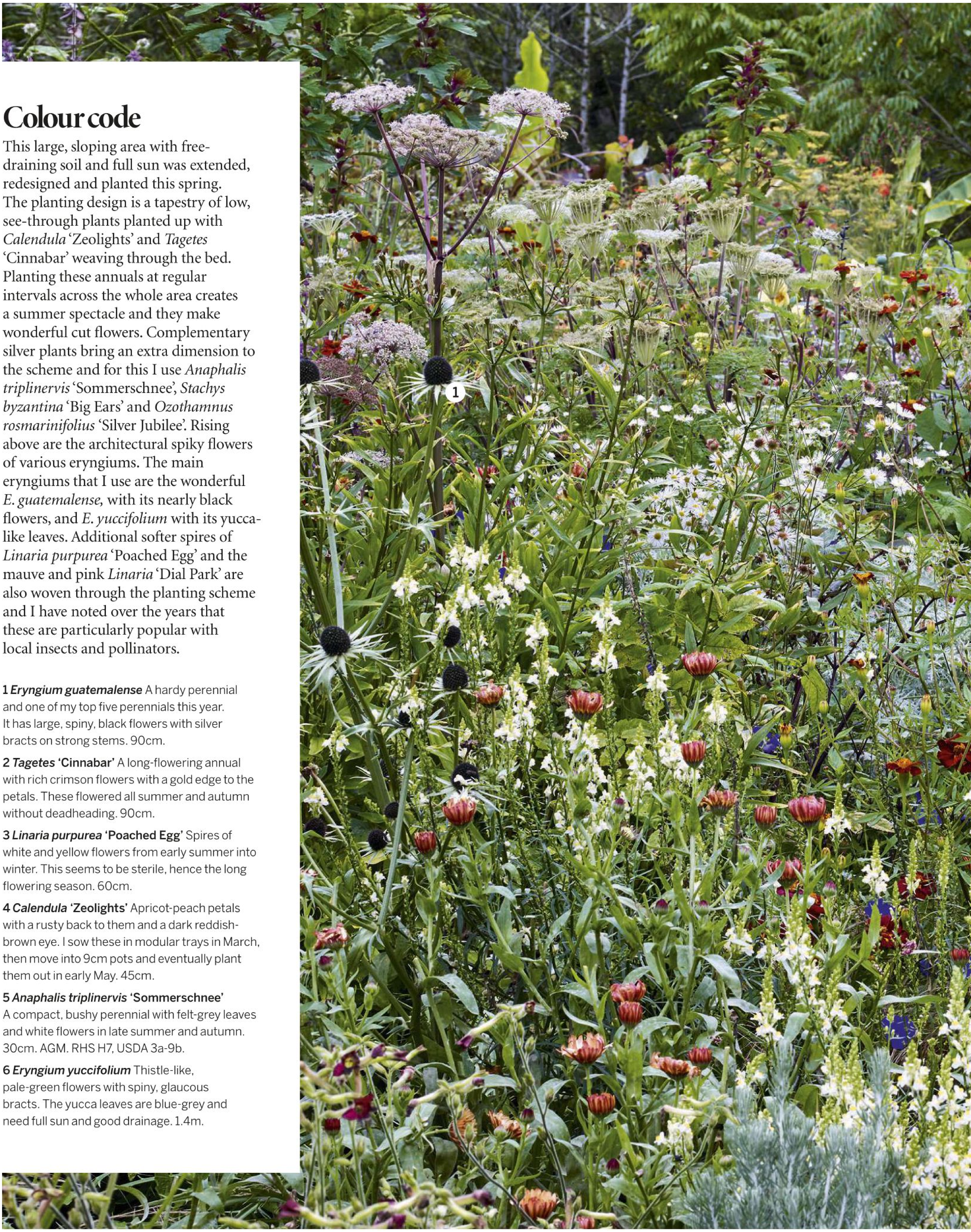
2 ***Tagetes* 'Cinnabar'** A long-flowering annual with rich crimson flowers with a gold edge to the petals. These flowered all summer and autumn without deadheading. 90cm.

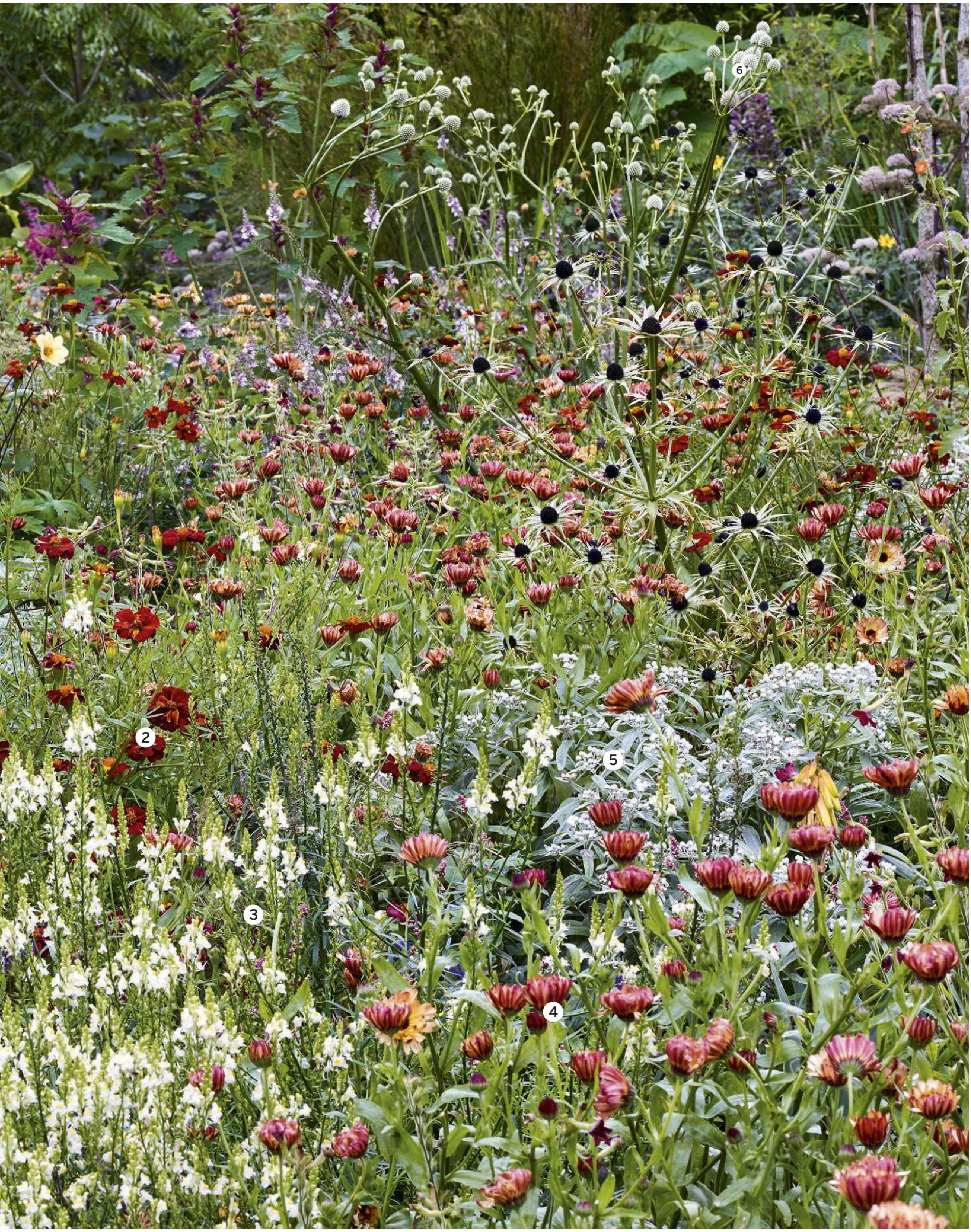
3 ***Linaria purpurea* 'Poached Egg'** Spires of white and yellow flowers from early summer into winter. This seems to be sterile, hence the long flowering season. 60cm.

4 ***Calendula* 'Zeolights'** Apricot-peach petals with a rusty back to them and a dark reddish-brown eye. I sow these in modular trays in March, then move into 9cm pots and eventually plant them out in early May. 45cm.

5 ***Anaphalis triplinervis* 'Sommerschnee'** A compact, bushy perennial with felt-grey leaves and white flowers in late summer and autumn. 30cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 3a-9b.

6 ***Eryngium yuccifolium*** Thistle-like, pale-green flowers with spiny, glaucous bracts. The yucca leaves are blue-grey and need full sun and good drainage. 1.4m.

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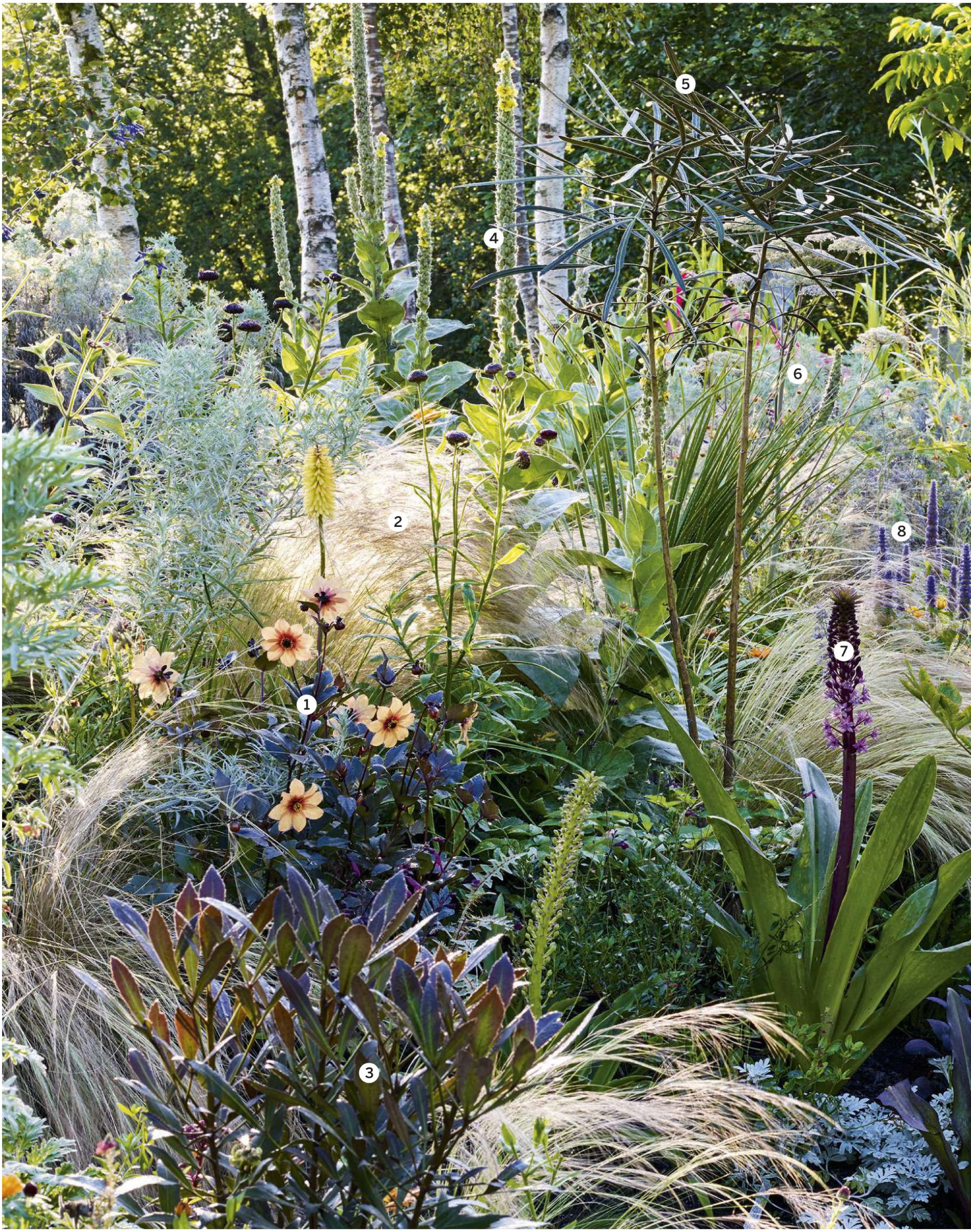
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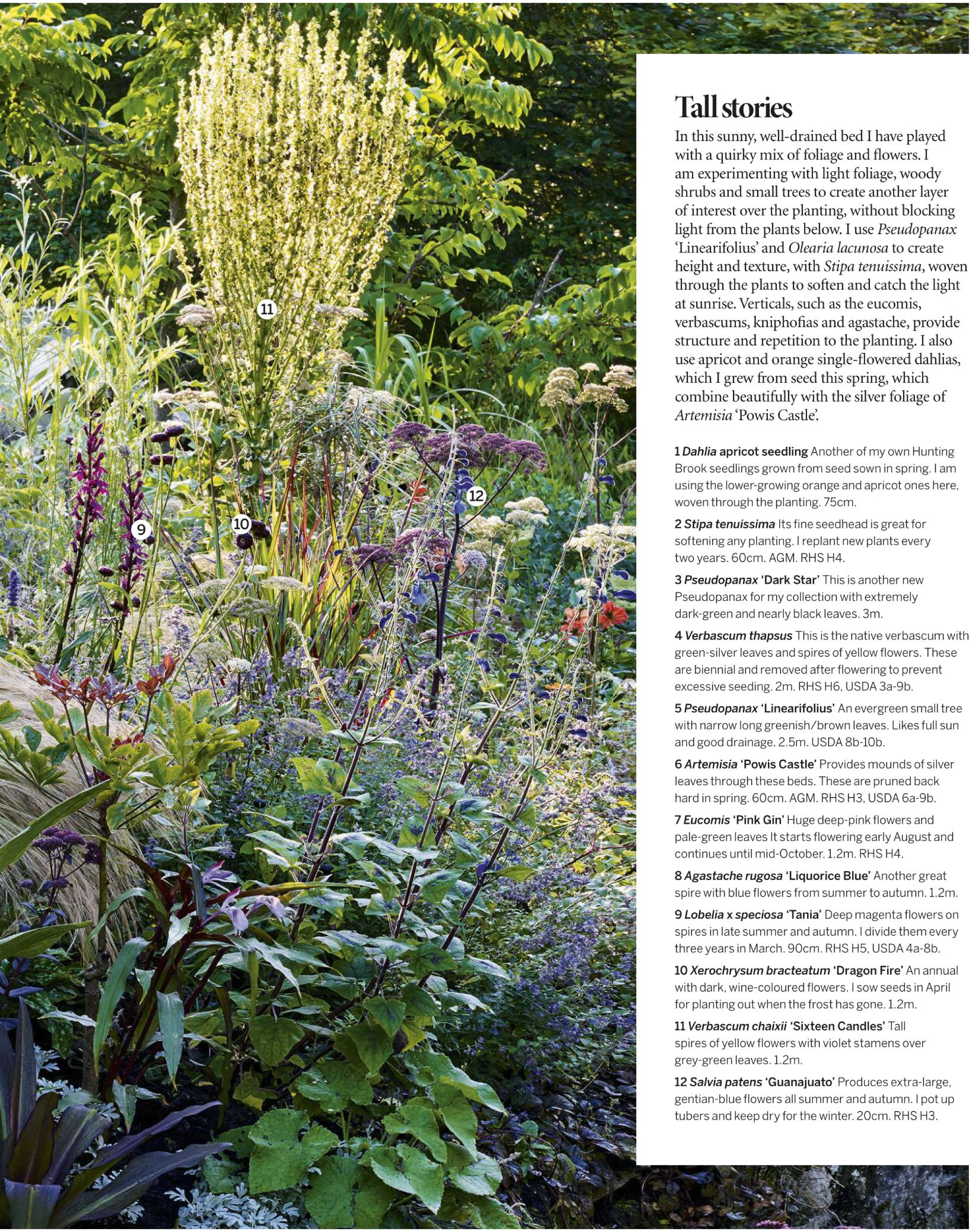


Tall stories

In this sunny, well-drained bed I have played with a quirky mix of foliage and flowers. I am experimenting with light foliage, woody shrubs and small trees to create another layer of interest over the planting, without blocking light from the plants below. I use *Pseudopanax* 'Linearifolius' and *Olearia lacunosa* to create height and texture, with *Stipa tenuissima*, woven through the plants to soften and catch the light at sunrise. Verticals, such as the eucomis, verbascums, kniphofias and agastache, provide structure and repetition to the planting. I also use apricot and orange single-flowered dahlias, which I grew from seed this spring, which combine beautifully with the silver foliage of *Artemisia* 'Powis Castle'.

1 *Dahlia* apricot seedling Another of my own Hunting Brook seedlings grown from seed sown in spring. I am using the lower-growing orange and apricot ones here, woven through the planting. 75cm.

2 *Stipa tenuissima* Its fine seedhead is great for softening any planting. I replant new plants every two years. 60cm. AGM. RHS H4.

3 *Pseudopanax* 'Dark Star' This is another new Pseudopanax for my collection with extremely dark-green and nearly black leaves. 3m.

4 *Verbascum thapsus* This is the native verbascum with green-silver leaves and spires of yellow flowers. These are biennial and removed after flowering to prevent excessive seeding. 2m. RHS H6, USDA 3a-9b.

5 *Pseudopanax* 'Linearifolius' An evergreen small tree with narrow long greenish/brown leaves. Likes full sun and good drainage. 2.5m. USDA 8b-10b.

6 *Artemisia* 'Powis Castle' Provides mounds of silver leaves through these beds. These are pruned back hard in spring. 60cm. AGM. RHS H3, USDA 6a-9b.

7 *Eucomis* 'Pink Gin' Huge deep-pink flowers and pale-green leaves It starts flowering early August and continues until mid-October. 1.2m. RHS H4.

8 *Agastache rugosa* 'Liquorice Blue' Another great spire with blue flowers from summer to autumn. 1.2m.

9 *Lobelia x speciosa* 'Tania' Deep magenta flowers on spires in late summer and autumn. I divide them every three years in March. 90cm. RHS H5, USDA 4a-8b.

10 *Xerochrysum bracteatum* 'Dragon Fire' An annual with dark, wine-coloured flowers. I sow seeds in April for planting out when the frost has gone. 1.2m.

11 *Verbascum chaixii* 'Sixteen Candles' Tall spires of yellow flowers with violet stamens over grey-green leaves. 1.2m.

12 *Salvia patens* 'Guanajuato' Produces extra-large, gentian-blue flowers all summer and autumn. I pot up tubers and keep dry for the winter. 20cm. RHS H3.

Long summer days

Most of the planting in the long, sunny border called Fred's Garden, is low-growing, transparent and more subtle in colour, allowing for an easy, gentle transition from the garden to countryside. *Pseudopanax* 'Tuatara' provides a very light canopy over the border for shape and height without blocking the view. Simple plants, such as *Agastache rugosa* 'Liquorice Blue', are repeated for their long season of interest. The quirky foliage of *Helianthus salicifolius* and various restios add drama and interest and I use salvias, such as *S. stolonifera*, to give the colour palette a lift.

1 ***Phlox paniculata*** **'Nirvana'** A white phlox flushed with a pink centre. 1.3m.

2 ***Pseudopanax*** **'Tuatara'** Has finely toothed dark-green, almost purple, leathery leaves. 2m.

3 ***Salvia*** **'Amistad'** A real work horse with rich, purple flowers and nearly black calyxes. Flowers summer into autumn. 1.5m. AGM. RHS H3.

4 ***Agastache rugosa*** **'Liquorice Blue'** Flowers from early summer into autumn with spires of fragrant indigo. An added benefit is the wonderful seedheads throughout winter. 90cm.

5 ***Dahlia*** **'Bright Eyes'** One of my favourite dahlias. It starts flowering in early summer and keeps going until first frost. 60cm. RHS H3.

6 ***Carduus nutans*** A biennial thistle with a rosette of basal spiky leaves and deep-pink, nodding flowers. Be careful seeds don't spread. 3m.

7 ***Helianthus salicifolius*** The spectacular willow-leaved perennial sunflower with its drooping, willow-like foliage. 3m. RHS H5, USDA 4a-9b.

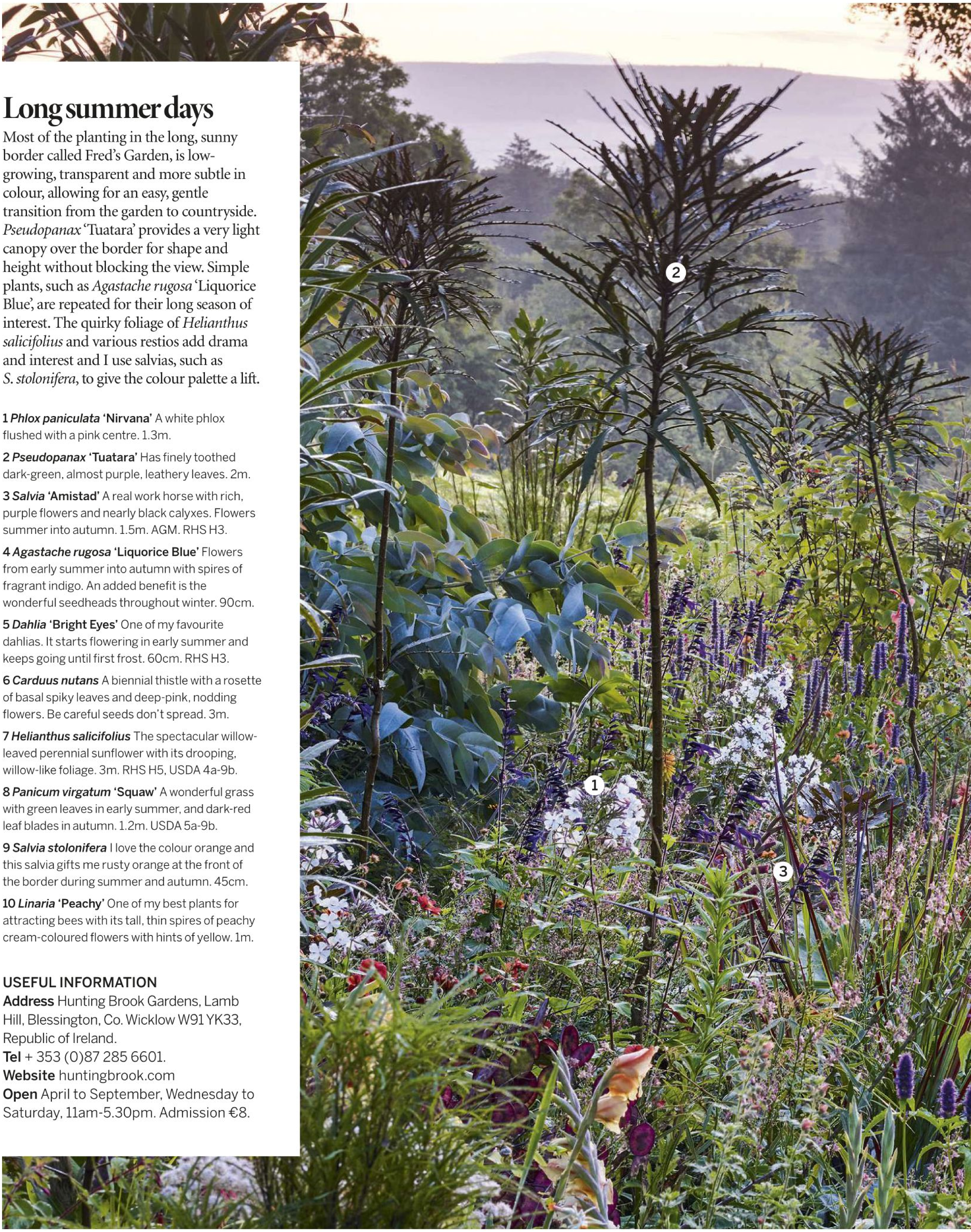
8 ***Panicum virgatum*** **'Squaw'** A wonderful grass with green leaves in early summer, and dark-red leaf blades in autumn. 1.2m. USDA 5a-9b.

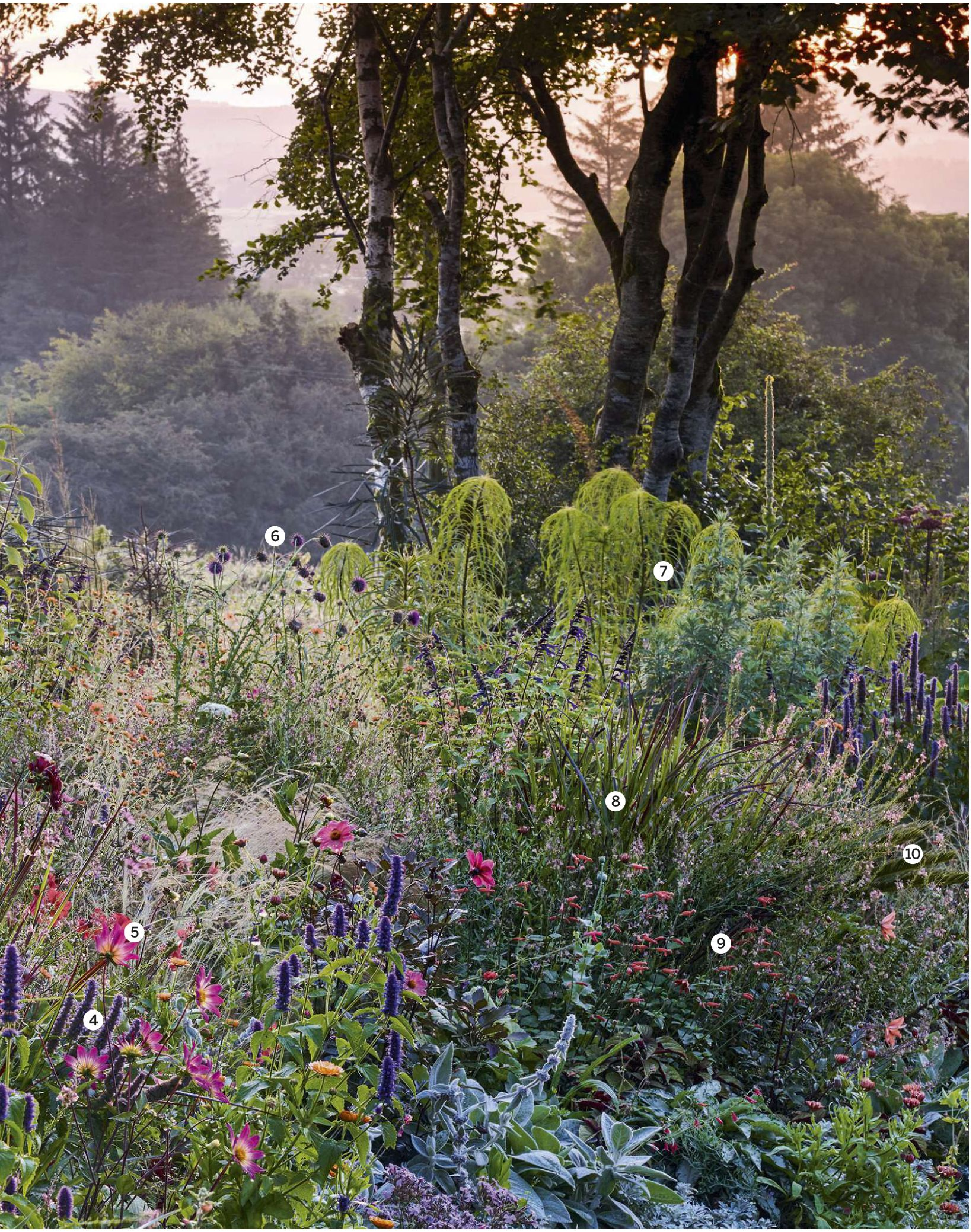
9 ***Salvia stolonifera*** I love the colour orange and this salvia gifts me rusty orange at the front of the border during summer and autumn. 45cm.

10 ***Linaria*** **'Peachy'** One of my best plants for attracting bees with its tall, thin spires of peachy cream-coloured flowers with hints of yellow. 1m.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Hunting Brook Gardens, Lamb Hill, Blessington, Co. Wicklow W91 YK33, Republic of Ireland.
Tel + 353 (0)87 285 6601.
Website huntingbrook.com
Open April to September, Wednesday to Saturday, 11am-5.30pm. Admission €8.

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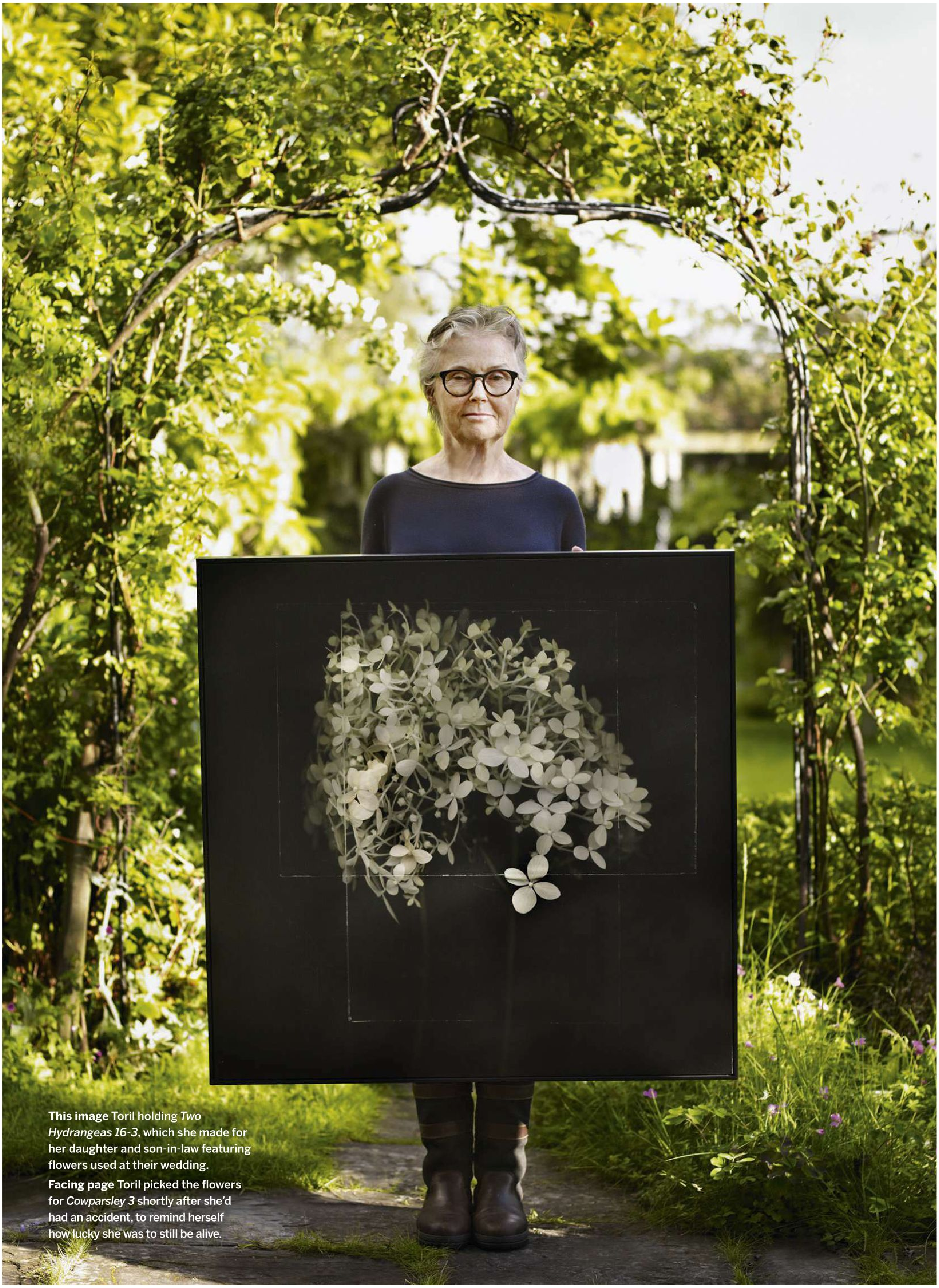
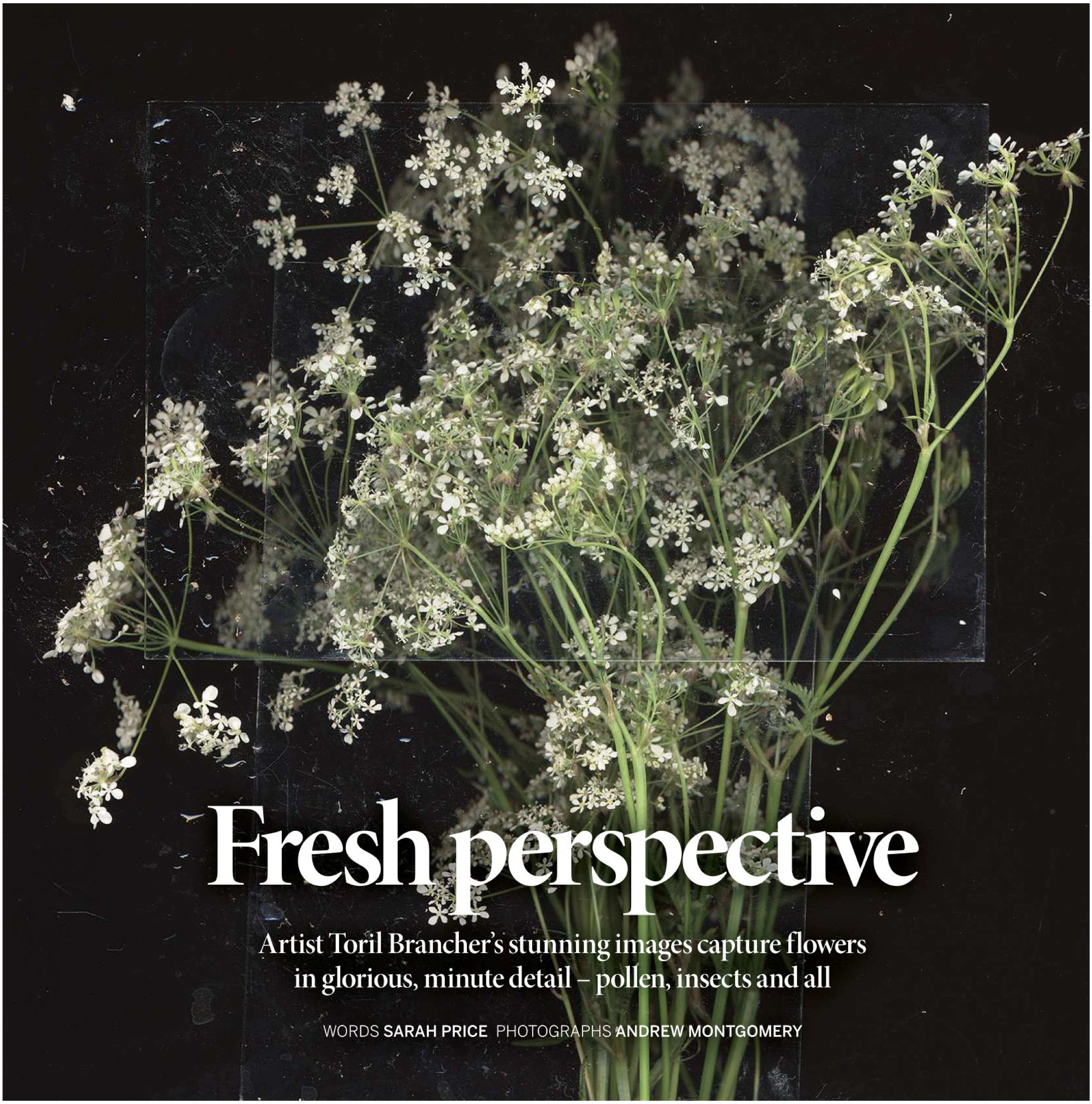


This image Toril holding *Two Hydrangeas 16-3*, which she made for her daughter and son-in-law featuring flowers used at their wedding.

Facing page Toril picked the flowers for *Cowparsley 3* shortly after she'd had an accident, to remind herself how lucky she was to still be alive.



Fresh perspective

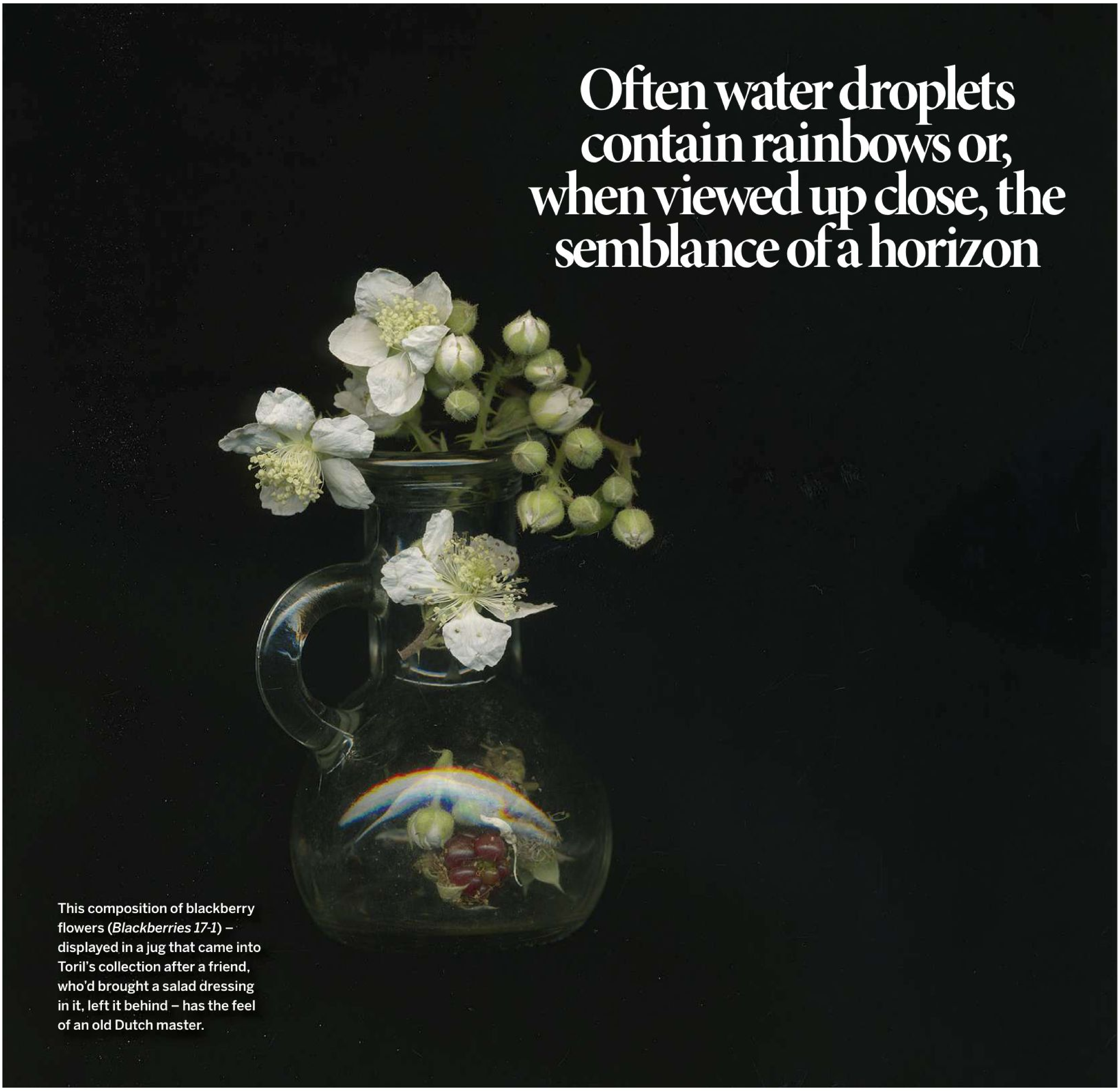
Artist Toril Brancher's stunning images capture flowers in glorious, minute detail – pollen, insects and all

WORDS **SARAH PRICE** PHOTOGRAPHS **ANDREW MONTGOMERY**

I first met Toril Brancher in a chance encounter along a lane in the foothills of the Sugar Loaf in the Black Mountains near Abergavenny. I was pushing my son in his buggy alongside banks covered in cow parsley, stitchwort and bluebells. Toril was walking in the opposite direction with a few sprigs from the hedgerow in her hand. She looked slightly sheepish as if caught in the act of pillaging the abundant flora. Our conversation then was about babies, but has since been about flowers and photography. At the time I didn't know that Toril was a photographer and that the cow parsley she was holding was destined for her studio.

Toril works with an ancient and battle-worn A4 flatbed scanner and sheets of glass (scratched through the reiteration of making) that act as barely seen frames for her subjects – flowers, seedheads and old glass bottles. It is a process akin to contact printing whereby objects are arranged on photography paper before being exposed to a source of light. Toril describes how the plants "cling on for dear life" as she composes them. Anyone who gathers wild-looking blooms from their garden can relate to this inevitable entanglement of stem, limb and delicate petal that resists a controlled rearrangement. There's always the feeling of other forces being in control, of the plant knowing which way it wants to twist. Once the blackout blinds are drawn to create the necessary degree of darkness, the alchemy of the process takes place as the light moves across the subject capturing hidden details: ▷

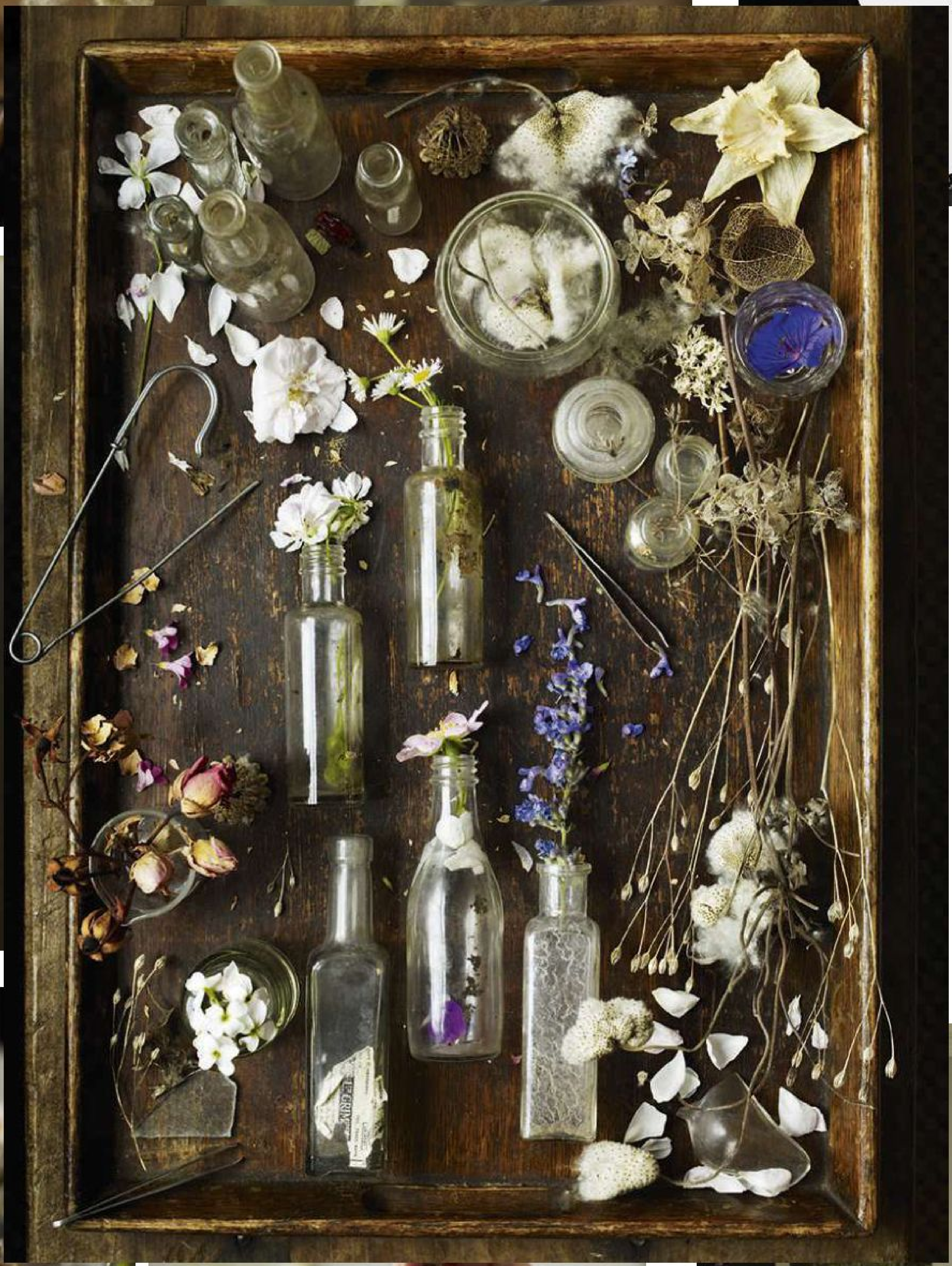
Often water droplets contain rainbows or, when viewed up close, the semblance of a horizon



This composition of blackberry flowers (*Blackberries 17-1*) – displayed in a jug that came into Toril's collection after a friend, who'd brought a salad dressing in it, left it behind – has the feel of an old Dutch master.

▷ specks of yellow celandine pollen, mould trapped within glass vessels, wavy strands of sheep's wool ensnared in white thistles, all recorded in high resolution against a near-black backdrop. Water is another element of the composition. Undulating patterns of moisture reveal surface tension between glass, soft petal and scanner. Often the droplets contain rainbows or, when viewed up close, the semblance of a horizon. It is a carefully honed process, requiring intuition and trust. Chance is embraced: "The bugs crawl across the glass as the pictures are made." And it is in these serendipitous details – tiny critters among spot-lit blooms or tattered petals among fresh unfurlings – that her prints osmose unusual beauty.

Originally from Oslo in Norway, Toril lived in Bristol and Japan before settling in Abergavenny 30 years ago. As a child she loved creating herbariums and it is easy to imagine the journey from these collections of pressed plants arranged on paper to her present-day work. But it hasn't always been just flowers. She studied documentary photography at the University of Wales, Newport, and much of her early work focused on outreach projects with local arts organisations, such as working with teenagers in the industrial town of Blaenavon. After hearing how one of her lecturers scanned bare soil, Toril had the idea of scanning plants. Ever since, she has gardened with a mind for growing specimens for her work, constantly recomposing her romantic plantings as if searching for an elusive spark of inspiration. Portraits of the same species from the same colony reappear years apart in subtlety altered guises. Every winter she gets excited about the first snowdrops emerging and rushes ▷



Clockwise from top left Anemone seedheads and *Rosa* 'Paul's Himalayan Musk' on Toril's desk; Toril carefully arranges heads of *Erigeron karvinskianus* on her scanner; in contrast to the dark background of her final images, Toril begins by arranging her subjects on white paper to clarify the details; Toril makes final adjustments to items on the scanner; a giant safety pin proves a useful tool for manipulating delicate flowers; grasses picked on a walk with her granddaughter add to the jumble of flowers; a blue *Geranium* x *magnificum* adds a rare note of colour to a new piece; plants ready for Toril to begin arranging a new image.

This image Toril at work at her desk surrounded by flora and her eclectic collection of old glass bottles and jars.

Facing page One of Toril's early experiments in printing on to fabric. This monochrome image of *Cowparsley 17-3* has now been made into a Roman blind.

Her art reminds me of what it is like to look at the world in minuscule detail, as a child might

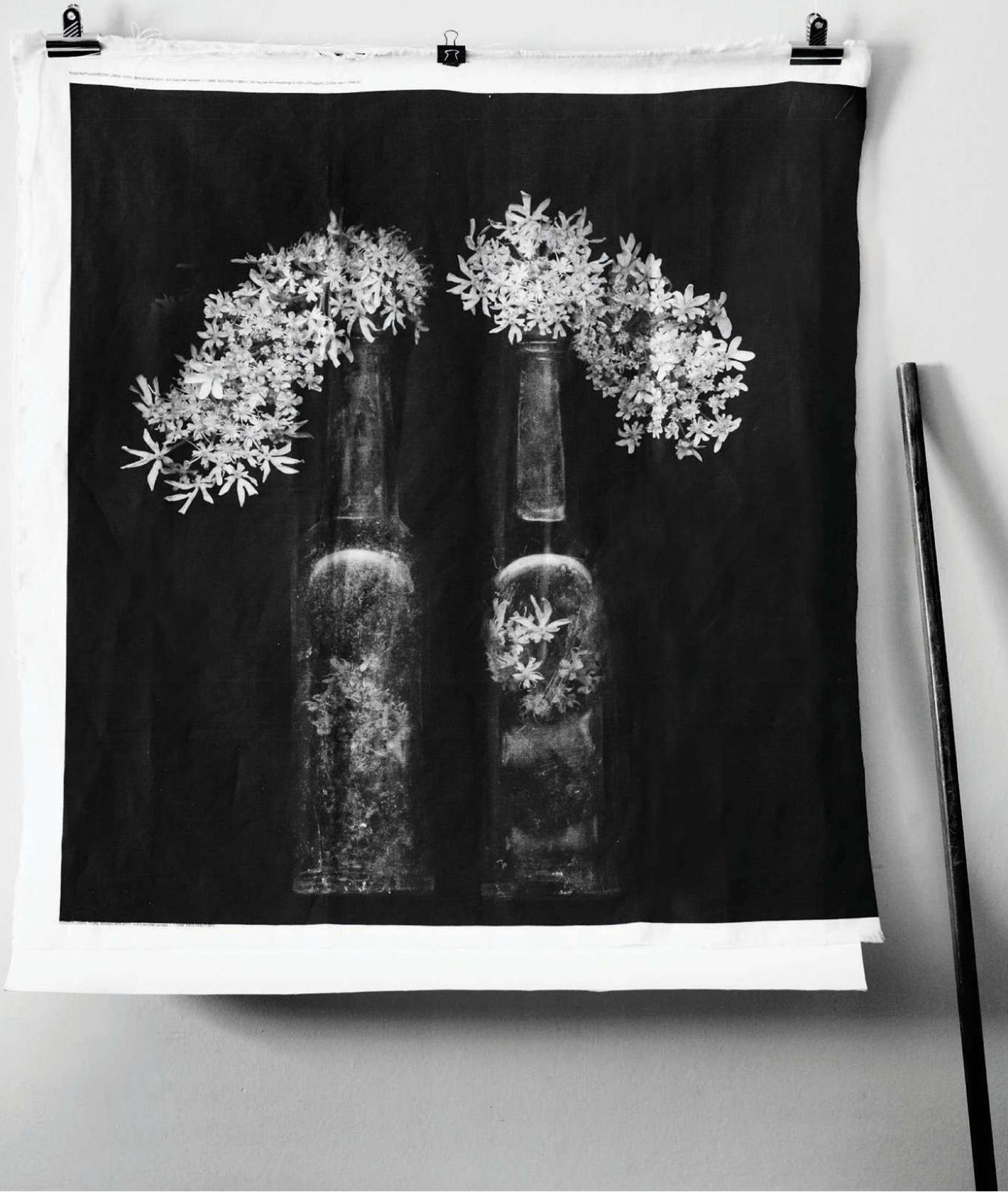
▷ emerging and rushes out to pick them for scanning. But it doesn't always work: "If the images don't get me in the gut while I'm making them, I can't expect them to move anyone else." She picks out images of lily of the valley, cut from a colony originally given to her by a friend who died in her forties. "The plants live on," she says. "In my garden the clump has established and it helps keep the memory of the gardener alive." Perhaps this constant illusion to decay, to death and in turn to life is what makes her art so alluring.

For me, there is a sense of the Gothic about her images – a single, fragile poppy stem floats within the dark, square space of the image's frame. Like the monochrome clothes that she wears, colour is kept minimal and when included – in the luxurious purple of a tulip, for example – it is deliberate.

Often blown up large, sometimes tenfold in scale, Toril's art reminds me of what it is like to look at the world in minuscule detail, as a young child might. Far removed from our brisk, digital capture of the world, her images feel closer to the paintings of the Dutch floral masters, whose naturalistic studies of blooms, their decay and fauna remind us nearly 300 years later of our own fragility and of how beauty, and life, are fleeting and transient, yet utterly absorbing. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Toril is represented by Gallery at Home, **galleryathome.co.uk**. Find out more about her work at **torilbrancher.com**



IN BRIEF

Name American Museum & Gardens.
What Museum garden featuring American New Perennial planting.
Where Bath.
Size Two and a half acres of a ten-acre garden open to the public.
Soil Highly alkaline.
Climate Maritime with average temperatures around 12ºC and average annual rainfall of 800mm.
Hardiness zone USDA 8.

Near the museum colourful planting, which includes the pink *Hydrangea paniculata* Vanille Fraise (= 'Renhy'), the yellow *Coreopsis verticillata* 'Zagreb' and pale-blue *Perovskia* 'Blue Spire', marks a transition from the Rose Garden to more recognisable Oehme, van Sweden perennial planting.

An American in Bath

For its first UK commission, the US design firm Oehme, van Sweden has created a New American-style garden in a very British setting

WORDS TIM RICHARDSON PHOTOGRAPHS CLAIRE TAKACS

So what, exactly, is a New American Garden? The curious can find out by visiting the American Museum & Gardens at Bath, where a new garden of this name opened last year and is now in the first flush of its maturity. The garden is notable because it is the only British project completed thus far by the Washington DC-based firm of Oehme, van Sweden & Associates (OvS), founded in 1977 by German plantsman Wolfgang Oehme and American landscape architect James van Sweden (both now deceased).

OvS established itself early on as the distinctively American voice of what came to be known as the New Perennial Movement in naturalistic planting, later developed by Dutch designer Piet Oudolf and adopted to varying degrees by many British designers. The American version of the style is considerably bolder and more robust in appearance than the European look, chiefly because of the difficulties created by extremes of climate across much of the USA. OvS has tended to use a fairly minimal palette of plants – which it knows will survive and thrive – deployed in broad swathes and large groupings, as opposed to the rather more mingled approach of the Europeans.

An American garden at the American Museum is clearly an appropriate idea, and it is fascinating to see the OvS style in a quintessentially British setting. What is more, lead landscape architect Eric Groft – who worked closely with Wolfgang and James and might be described as the ‘keeper of the flame’ of the OvS style – has used the opportunity to create a visual celebration of the development of the firm’s planting style. Before any planting could go in, OvS worked on a masterplan for much of the 125-acre estate, clearing the views down into the valley and flattening and extending the lawn immediately adjacent to the Georgian mansion that contains the museum. The New American garden’s design is based on the concept of a circuit walk around the entire two-and-a-half-acre space, an idea taken from Thomas Jefferson’s garden at Monticello.

Visitors enter via a pair of jaunty entrance pavilions, their form based on that of a Regency tea caddy exhibited in the museum. A terrace provides views across the whole space, and in season the scent emanating from a collection of American roses (hybridised in the USA) rises up from below. This intervention feels slightly out of kilter with the rest of the planting, but one is soon immersed in ‘first-phase’ OvS planting near the house, featuring rudbeckias (*R. fulgida* var. *sullivantii* ‘Goldsturm’, tall *R. maxima* and *R. laciniata* ‘Herbstsonne’), achilleas and three kinds of nepeta, bolstered by miscanthus grasses and old standby *Calamagrostis* x *acutiflora* ‘Karl Foerster’.

In its first season the scale appeared rather awry because, as Eric wryly comments, “The perennials have consistently over-achieved, while our famous grasses have

To continue please turn to page 62 ▷

Planting along the Winding Way or circuit walk marks the evolution of OvS style. Near the museum it features plants from the original OvS palette developed in the 1980s and early 1990s that focused on native American plants, including as here *Calamagrostis x acutiflora* ‘Karl Foerster’, *Rudbeckia fulgida* var. *sullivantii* ‘Goldsturm’ and *Allium* ‘Summer Drummer’.

The American version of the New Perennial Movement is considerably bolder and more robust

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8 KEY PLANTS

1 *Veronicastrum virginicum* f. *roseum*
The soaring pink spikes of this late-summer-flowering perennial are the perfect foil to fluffy textured grasses, such as pennisetum, or as here with *Panicum virgatum* 'Hänse Herms'. 1.4m. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b[†].

2 *Helenium* 'Rubinzwerg'
Its rich vermilion flowers are bold, and strong seedheads follow providing the perfect counter balance to the softer gauze-like planting, such as *Persicaria amplexicaulis* 'Rosea' 1.2m. AGM[*]. RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

3 *Perovskia atriplicifolia*
A classic OvS plant, a useful vertical accent and filler for large areas. It sparkles when planted alongside yellow, daisy-flowered plants such as *Coreopsis verticillata* 'Zagreb', pink echinaceas and violet *Liatris spicata* 'Kobold'. 75cm. RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.

4 *Echinacea purpurea* 'Magnus'
Perhaps the species most closely associated with the OvS look, showy yet almost indestructible and great for pollinators. 1m. RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.

5 *Acanthus hungaricus*
The bracts of this acanthus species are somewhat more elegant than others. Has an upright, regal presence and strong architectural form useful for anchoring corners of plantings. 1.2m. RHS H6, USDA 5a-10b.

6 *Allium* 'Summer Drummer'
The flowerheads of this tall allium can grow to around 20cm in diameter, making it durable as a foil to most other perennials and grasses. 1.8m. RHS H5.

7 *Rudbeckia maxima*
A tall rudbeckia with a slightly more naturalistic appearance. It looks best when it is generously deployed. 2.1m. RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b.

8 *Molinia caerulea* subsp. *caerulea* 'Dauerstrahl'
An upright grass with gently curving purple seedheads and stems that turn a soft golden, butter-colour in autumn. 1.2m. USDA 5a-9b.

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[*] Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
[†] Hardiness ratings given where available.

The design is based on the concept of a circuit walk, an idea from Thomas Jefferson's garden

At the far south end of the garden a turf amphitheatre lends a different note to the more colourful planting elsewhere. A simple green space edged only by white *Lysimachia clethroides* acts almost as a palate cleanser.

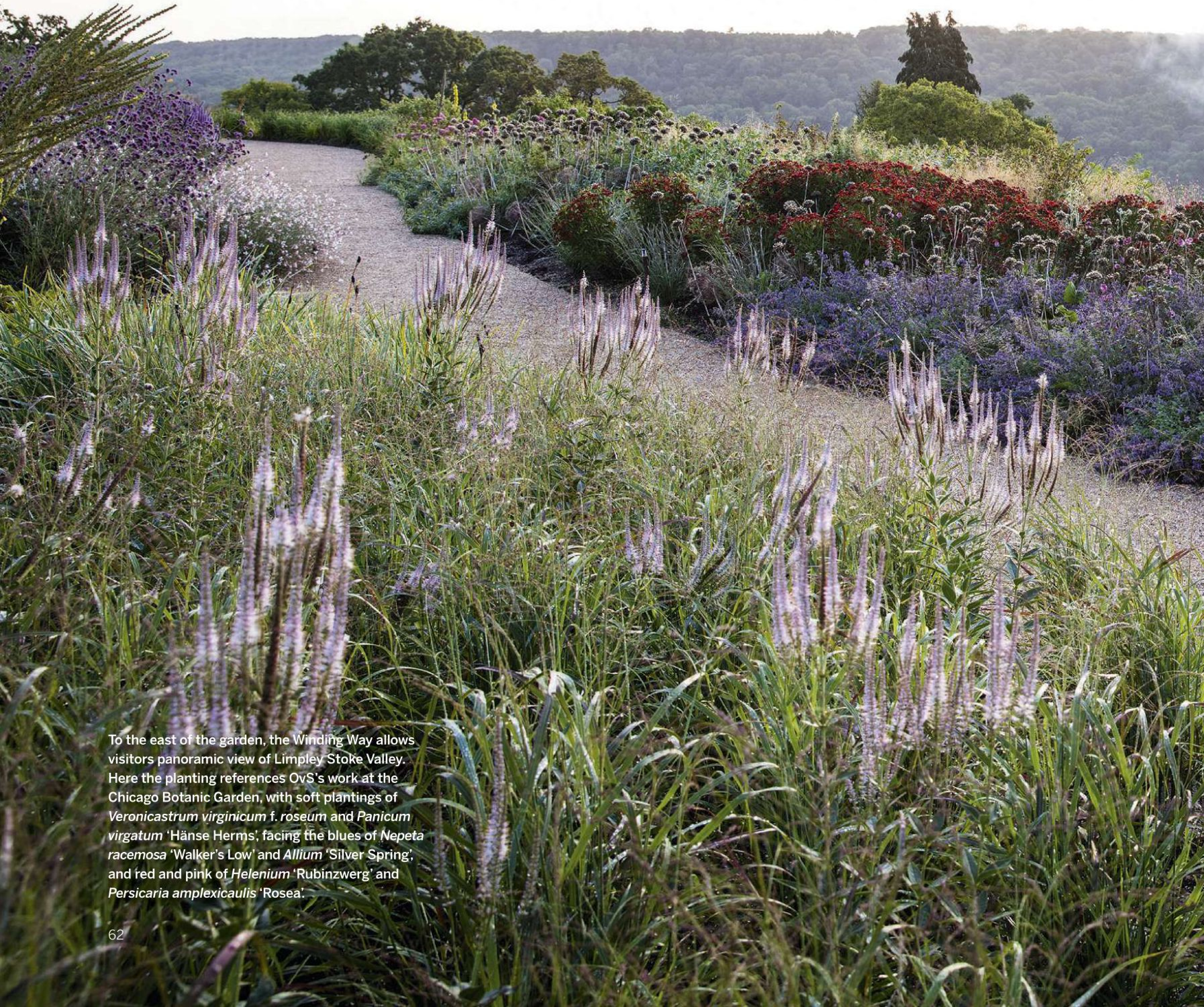
▷ under-achieved." In addition, certain plants that might play a supporting role in the USA have in the UK taken centre stage, notably the tall *Allium* 'Summer Drummer' and acanthus plants which grow to 2m. The alliums mingle with achillea and rudbeckia, though Eric notes with a slight sense of wonderment that he has never seen the achillea flowering at the same time as the rudbeckia in the USA. *Hylotelephium* 'Herbstfreude' appears as a key OvS foundation plant – "We often use it at path corners," Eric explains, "just to hold it all down and let the fireworks go off beyond." Those fireworks might include simple, muscular combinations, such as globular alliums with feathery pennisetum grass and spiky acanthus, or bristly purple *Liatris spicata* with clump-forming *Coreopsis verticillata* 'Zagreb'. A group of five *Magnolia virginiana* provide a sense of scale next to the building and a screen wall.

The tone of the planting alters appreciably as you wander down towards the lip of the valley and along a new path made at its edge. A more woodlandy feel has been introduced with a glade-like canopy of tulip trees (still young) and large groupings of *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Limelight' and *H. arborescens* 'Annabelle', euphorbia, deschampsia, daylilies, blue agapanthus, *Hylotelephium* 'Matrona' and *Viburnum opulus* 'Compactum' for autumn colour and berries. There is also a small eruption of desert planting featuring American prickly pear *Opuntia humifus*a and aeonium, fringed by panicum grass.

The path descends towards the base of a turf amphitheatre, where great swathes of lysimachia create what Eric describes as a 'white hush', with groups of *Miscanthus* x *giganteus* 'Aksel Olsen' and bands of rudbeckia. "What I didn't anticipate was everything blooming at once – and for so long!" Eric says. As it stands, the New American Garden forms an interesting counterpoint to another nearby garden within easy reach: Oudolf Field at Hauser & Wirth, in Bruton, Somerset. A twin visit provides the ideal opportunity to compare and contrast the European and American approaches. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address American Museum & Gardens, Claverton Manor, Bath BA2 7BD. **Tel** 01225 460503. **Website** americanmuseum.org
Open Tuesday to Sunday, 11am-4pm until 22 December; 14 March to 1 November, 10am-5pm. Admission £7.50.


To the east of the garden, the Winding Way allows visitors panoramic view of Limpley Stoke Valley. Here the planting references OvS's work at the Chicago Botanic Garden, with soft plantings of *Veronicastrum virginicum* f. *roseum* and *Panicum virgatum* 'Hänse Herms', facing the blues of *Nepeta racemosa* 'Walker's Low' and *Allium* 'Silver Spring', and red and pink of *Helenium* 'Rubinzwerg' and *Persicaria amplexicaulis* 'Rosea'.

What I didn't anticipate was everything blooming at once – and for so long

PHILIPPE LECOUFLE

The former head of historic French nursery Vacherot & Lecoufle, on why he has no regrets on choosing raising orchids over racing cars, and the pleasures of exhibiting new plants

WORDS JOHN HOYLAND PORTRAIT CHARLIE HOPKINSON

Although born into a family of orchid growers Philippe Lecoufle imagined a life surrounded not by beautiful plants but at the wheel of a car. "As a young man I was obsessed with cars and racing. It was the 1960s and in France there was nothing more exciting than racing cars."

In hindsight, he realises that as a scion of one of the most important orchid breeders and growers it was inevitable that he would join the family business. The company was founded in 1886 by Philippe's great-grandfather, Henri Vacherot, who was joined at the beginning of the 20th century by his son-in-law, Maurice Lecoufle. The nursery developed an international reputation for breeding spectacular orchids. A major breakthrough in orchid growing came in 1960 with the pioneering of micropropagation by Philippe's father, also called Maurice. "The history of our family and the company is complex and made worse by the habit of calling everyone either Maurice or Marcel," says Philippe.

Orchid production is very much an international business, and Philippe's father travelled widely. "When I was young my teacher told my father that his son was too stupid to ever learn to speak a foreign language so I was sent to school in England for four years. When I came home at the age of 18, I could speak English and started working with my father." As a child he'd had to repot and clean plants, so was already familiar with orchids but Philippe now began to study hybridisation and plant management techniques, working first in France and then in the USA and Germany. "I learned every aspect of hybridisation and cultivation. The more I learned the more attached I became to orchids."

> IT IS A GREAT REWARD FOR ME TO SEE THE PLEASURE OUR PLANTS BRING. I LOVE SEEING PEOPLE'S REACTION, THEIR EXCITEMENT AT OUR PLANTS

The influence of Vacherot & Lecoufle on the orchid trade has been enormous. The nursery was the first to introduce *Phalaenopsis* with spotted flowers and in the USA such plants are known as French spots. Most of the pure-white *Phalaenopsis* available today are descended from one of their hybrids, *Phalaenopsis* Henriette Lecoufle gx 'Boule de Neige', which Philippe remembers presenting to the RHS. "One of my happiest memories is of driving on a cold day in 1968 with my father to London with this great big plant on the back seat and seeing the reaction of the RHS to our creation." The plant received the Society's Award of Merit and First Class Certificate. Two decades later, six of Philippe's *Phalaenopsis* hybrids received Awards of Merit on the same day. Philippe himself has been awarded the RHS Veitch Memorial Medal.

Philippe is probably best known to British gardeners for his stands at flower shows, particularly the RHS Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival. Elegant and urbane, he spends his days at shows engaging passionately and knowledgeably with customers and orchid enthusiasts. His exhibits always contain plants of the highest quality arranged in unfussy, graceful displays. "Plant shows are hard work, particularly Hampton Court, because we have to transport the plants through the cool of the night but it is worth it," he says. "It is a great reward for me to see the pleasure our plants bring. I love seeing people's reaction, their excitement at our plants." Show judges also react well to Philippe's displays and at Hampton Court awarded him Best in Show three years running. "I feel honoured to have received this award for three years and also content that they did not give it us again, because other nurseries also need to be encouraged."

Due in part to his father's work promoting propagation techniques, orchids are now widely available. *Phalaenopsis* are produced on an industrial scale and you can find them for sale very cheaply in supermarkets throughout the world. "We do not compete with this," says Philippe. "We continue to breed new plants, propagate our favourites always to the highest quality. It is the quality of our plants and the help we give to grow them that is the key to our success." Philippe thinks that the disposable nature of mass-produced orchids is not good for the image of orchid growing. "Orchids can live for ever, so we need to educate people how to care for their plants." Educating consumers about how to nurture their plants is an important part of the nursery's work.

Philippe is now officially retired and has handed the nursery on to the next generation of the family. "I have the great good fortune to have three beautiful daughters and one of them, Colombe, wants to take the company forward." Philippe will continue to hybridise orchids and to support his daughter but, he says, "young people have to be allowed to do things in their own way without interference from my generation. I inherited from my father something very special and am happy to pass it on." And regrets about the missed racing driver career? "Oh no, in the 1960s racing driving was a very dangerous occupation. I would not have had such a long and satisfying life working with something I am passionate about, working with these beautiful plants." □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Vacherot & Lecoufle, La Tuilerie, 29, Rue de Valenton,
94470 Boissy-Saint-Léger, France.
Tel + 33 (0)1 45 69 10 42, lorchidee.fr

Open daily except Mondays. The nursery also organises regular open days and groups can arrange guided visits of the collections.

Bright and bountiful

The abundant, vividly coloured gardens that surround the 14th-century Oxfordshire house of potter Emma Bridgewater and illustrator Matthew Rice have been created in just a handful of years

WORDS NON MORRIS PHOTOGRAPHS EVA NEMETH

IN BRIEF

Name Ham Court.
What Country garden with two kitchen gardens around a moated, former gate house of a 14th-century castle.
Where Oxfordshire.
Size Around four acres of ornamental garden.
Soil Constantly improved, shallow, free-draining, gravelly soil.
Climate Cold winters, warm summers and low rainfall.
Hardiness zone USDA 8a.

In the productive Kitchen Garden a mix of herbs and veg, including rosemary, fennel, red orache and spinach combine with lavender, sweet peas and two *Calendula officinalis* cultivars: 'Art Shades' and 'Indian Prince'.

There is evidence of an unstoppable, hands-on enthusiasm and a fine eye for colour and detail everywhere you look at Ham Court, from the rainbow wands of gladioli that welcome you into the intensely scented greenhouse, to the ruffled perfection of the butterhead lettuces that grow among plump hedges of rosemary and lavender in the Kitchen Garden. Every element has been carefully sourced or cleverly handmade and contributes to the settled sense of place. There are reclaimed, wrought iron garden gates, charmingly irregular chestnut paling fences and architectural stands of mauve-flushed artichokes against the blond, stone walls. Even the hen house, with its handsome stone trough beneath a canopy of bright-green vine, is an exquisite gathering point for the velvety hens – Old English Game and Leghorn – that animate the scene.

It is hard to believe that work on the garden only started seven years ago. Ham Court was developed by artist-designer Matthew Rice and potter Emma Bridgewater as a place to live and work. The starting point was a bleak and gardenless farm that ignored the romantic potential of its stone barns and 14th-century castle gate house. The scale of the project was daunting: "For the first two years there were constant diggers and dumper trucks clearing farm buildings," says Matthew. One of the first tasks was to plant over 11,000 trees as whips to blur the boundaries of the plot and create a sense, as the house was glimpsed through the trees, that "there might be more actual castle". The tree planting has been a triumph: "Trees grow quicker than radishes," smiles Matthew. There are now ten acres of woodland, with cherry tree walks and lots of smoky cricket-bat willow (*Salix alba* var. *caerulea*).

A small ditch was transformed into a moat that now holds the fine farm buildings in its embrace and the rubble-filled yards were levelled and low walls built to define the different spaces. Hazel was planted to coppice for use in the Kitchen Garden: "At last, after six years, we have all we need," says Matthew. When it came to the orchard, after the disappointing rare local apples planted in their previous garden in Norfolk, "this time I got the ones we like eating instead – 'Egremont Russet' and 'Golden Delicious', good versions of which are hard to find in the shops."

Closer to the house, the Kitchen Garden was another priority: "We excavated, put two feet of muck and topsoil over rubble, but failed to put in land drains; in effect we created a swimming pool." So the garden was dismantled and land drains added – and an elegant greenhouse was built by Emma's brother-in-law Toti Gifford. The greenhouse, which extends from the stone potting shed and runs the length of the Kitchen

To continue turn to page 72 ▷

This image Lavender thrives in the free-draining soil at Ham Court, ensuring that here in the Kitchen Garden the air is filled with its scent. The Kitchen Garden is framed on one side by a handsome hedge of dog rose, *Rosa canina*, not in flower.

Opposite page The Office Garden is a delightful, walled, gravel garden dancing with self-seeding poppies and cornflowers, anchored with low, stone troughs, wall-trained roses and free-standing fig trees.

Every element has been carefully sourced or cleverly handmade and contributes to the settled sense of place

In winter, the greenhouse hums with propagation; in summer, the air is a heady mix of herbs and pelagoniums

This image Plants spill on to paths of fine limestone chippings in the Kitchen Garden. The greenhouse, built by Toti Gifford, runs along one side of the garden.

Right An inviting pair of chairs in the headily scented conservatory. A simple trellis of hazel poles against the black-painted wall is smothered in plumbago in summer and is an effective backdrop to the towering mounds of the African marigold, *Tagetes* 'Cinnabar', as well as the poisonous caper spurge (*Euphorbia lathyris*).

▷ Garden, began to create an important sense of shelter. In winter it is humming with propagation – "I love the fact that in the autumn you can put 12 salvia cuttings in a pot, and by the spring have enough plants for an entire border," says Matthew – and in summer it becomes a fantastically colourful place to sit, the air a heady cocktail of mint, basil and pelargoniums.

The Kitchen Garden is delightfully enclosed on two sides by a hedge of dog rose (*Rosa canina*). Matthew prunes out the young, whippy growth when the rose is just in bud, leaving the hedges to become entire walls of pale-pink dog roses. A storybook tunnel made from chestnut palings runs down the centre of the space: "This year it's got borlotti and 'Blue Lake' beans and a wonderful climber called *Cucurbita moschata* 'Tromboncino' – a huge, trombone-shaped squash that tastes delicious and makes visitors smile."

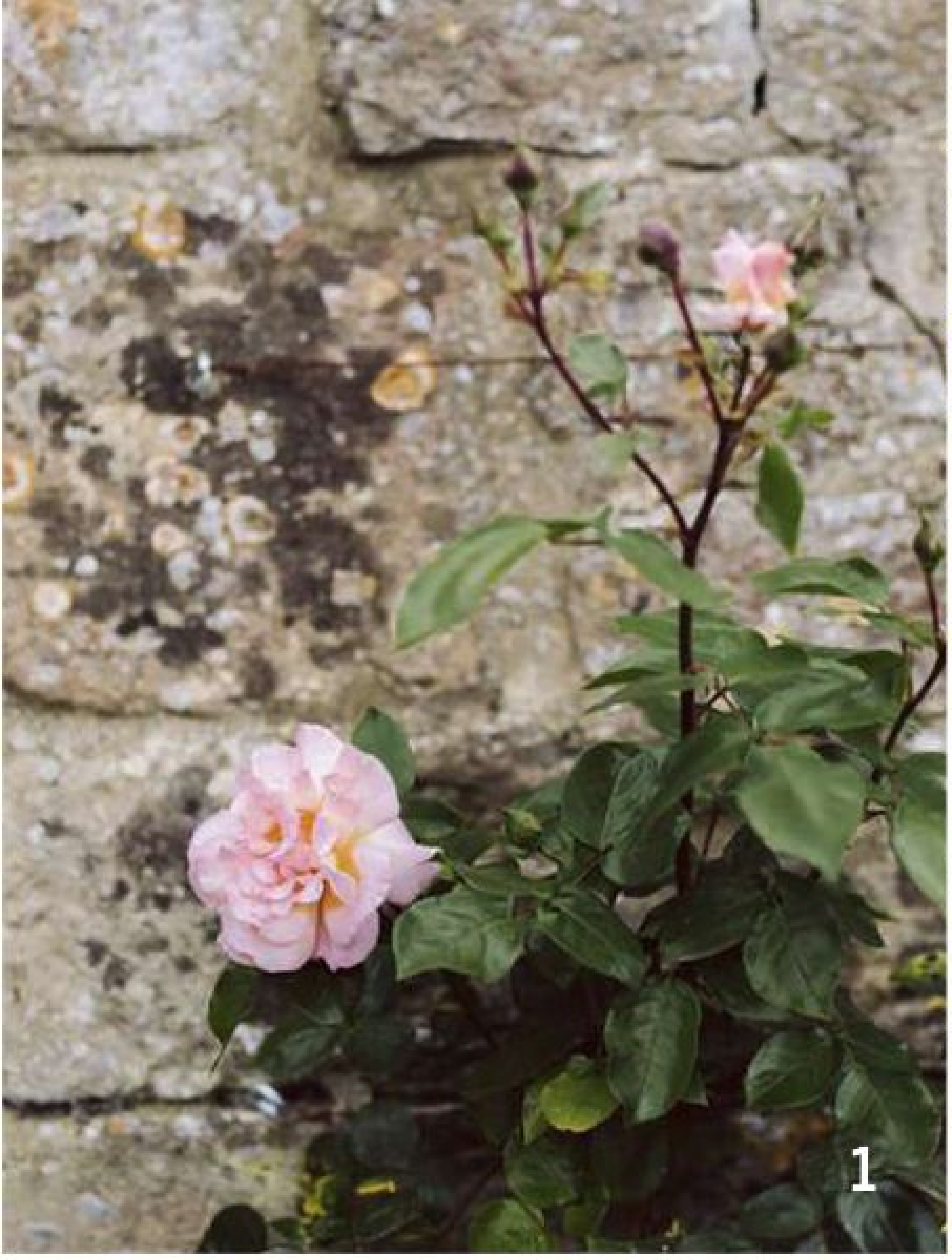
Outside the Studio Barn, the Office Garden is a triumph: an airy gravel garden with a delicate, pointillist feel, comprising fig trees, gorgeous old stone troughs, tiny roses trained against the walls, self-seeding poppies and cornflowers and, linking it all together, breathtaking, branching spires of the palest-yellow *Verbascum phlomoides* 'Spica'.

Ham Court's continuing evolution will be one to watch. A second kitchen garden, the Square Garden, is already bursting with sunflowers and asparagus, there are plans to populate the swathe of gravel in front of the house with choice euphorbias and to plant dreamy groves of lilac and philadelphus around the moat at the back. It is already a wonderfully relaxed and layered garden, full of surprises and delights, a celebration of scent and colour and of the power of plants to create a sense of shelter and welcome. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Ham Court, Bampton, Oxfordshire OX18 2HG.
Website ngs.org.uk. **Open** The garden normally opens annually for the National Garden Scheme, but it is not planning to open in 2020. Look out on the NGS website for future dates.

This image The Kitchen Garden with its storybook tunnel of chestnut palings. In the growing season, it is host to borlotti and 'Blue Lake' green beans and 'Tromboncino' squash, which hang down from the tunnel at an incredible 1.2m.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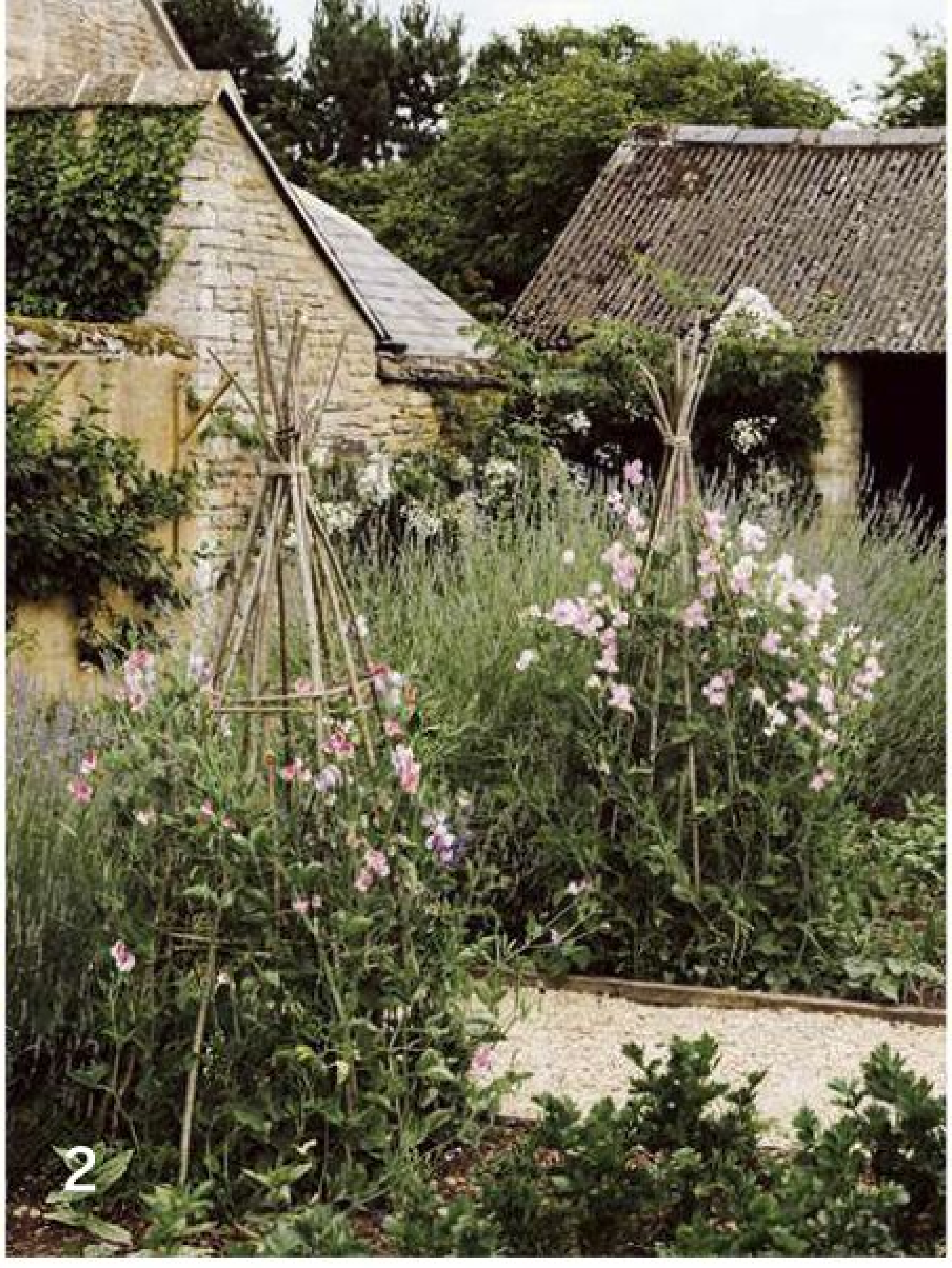
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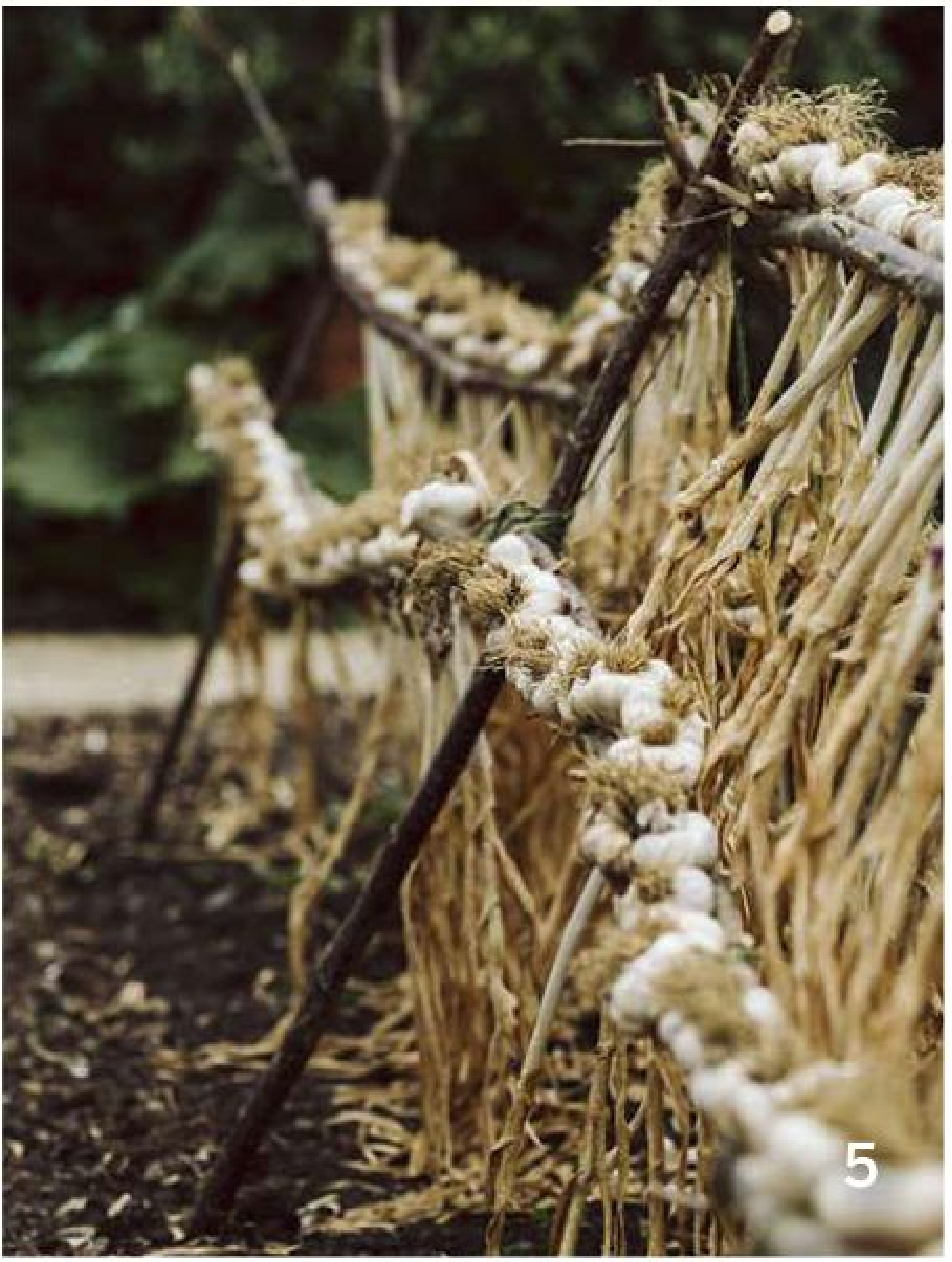
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12 KEY ELEMENTS FROM HAM COURT

1 The name of this exceptionally fragrant, pale-pink, apricot-flushed climbing rose is not known, but it is a favourite and particularly healthy plant that was found growing at the family's previous home in Norfolk and brought to Ham Court as a cutting.

2 On either side of the path in the Kitchen Garden Matthew created wigwams of coppiced hazel up which grow a selection of fragrant sweet peas, including *Lathyrus odorus* 'Anniversary' and *L.odorus* 'Gwendoline'.

3 Sunflowers in the Square Garden. Matthew collects seeds from his sunflowers each year and many have now hybridised. Favourite sunflowers include the rich-bronze *Helianthus annuus* 'Velvet Queen' and the pale lemon-yellow 'Vanilla Ice', both of which are long-flowering and freely branching – qualities that are "essential for cutting".

4 Zinnias enjoy their cosseted position in the polytunnel. Matthew particularly likes the exuberance and clear colours of the Benary's Giants Series.

5 The rack for drying garlic in the Kitchen Garden has been made using home-coppiced hazel poles. It ensures that the garlic bulbs are properly dried so that they last throughout the winter.

6 In the Kitchen Garden the yellow flowers of lady's mantel *Alchemilla mollis* and fennel create a wonderful contrast with the fragrant, purple flowers of *Lavandula angustifolia* 'Munstead'.

7 *Monarda* 'Cambridge Scarlet' The flowers of this tall, long-lasting bergamot form a run of intense red along the voluptuous Greenhouse Border and are a magnet for bees and butterflies. 90cm. RHS H4[†].

8 *Levisticum officinale* (lovage) Used as a herb, but also wonderful as a herbaceous perennial. Grown in the Greenhouse Border for its statuesque presence, its pale, yellow-green flower umbels and its glossy leaves. 2m. RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.

9 *Euphorbia lathyris* (caper spurge) An ornamental, architectural plant with erect stems and slender, glaucous, green leaves. Be careful though as all parts of the plant are poisonous. 1.2m. RHS H5.

10 *Rosa* 'Wedding Day' A vigorous, rambling rose bearing large clusters of scented, creamy-white flowers, with bright-yellow stamens, that age to pink. The stems are relatively thornless, so it's a good choice if planting near a path. 8m. RHS H6.

11 *Prunus cerasus* 'Morello' Four cherry trees are trained as espaliers against the north-facing wall of the Kitchen Garden. They have grown magnificently, producing abundant fruit a couple of years after planting as whips. 10m. AGM*. RHS H6.

12 *Cynara cardunculus* Scolymus Group Globe artichokes add dusky colour and architecture to the beautiful stone walls of the old barns. They are grown against rustic chestnut paling in the Square Garden and within the main Kitchen Garden. The edible heads are often served up in Ham Court's kitchen. 2.5m. RHS H5.

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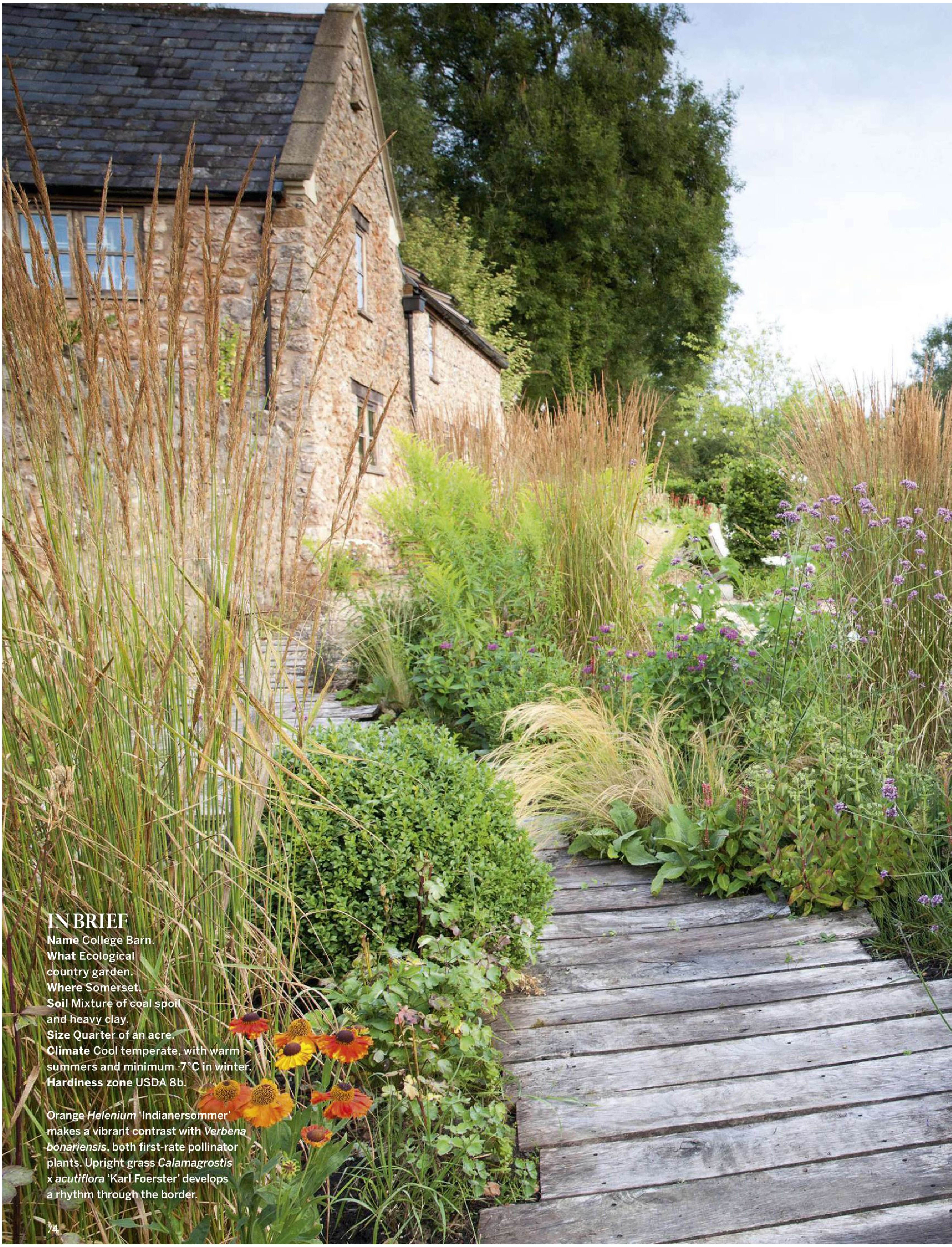
[*] Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.

[†] Hardiness ratings given where available.



IN BRIEF

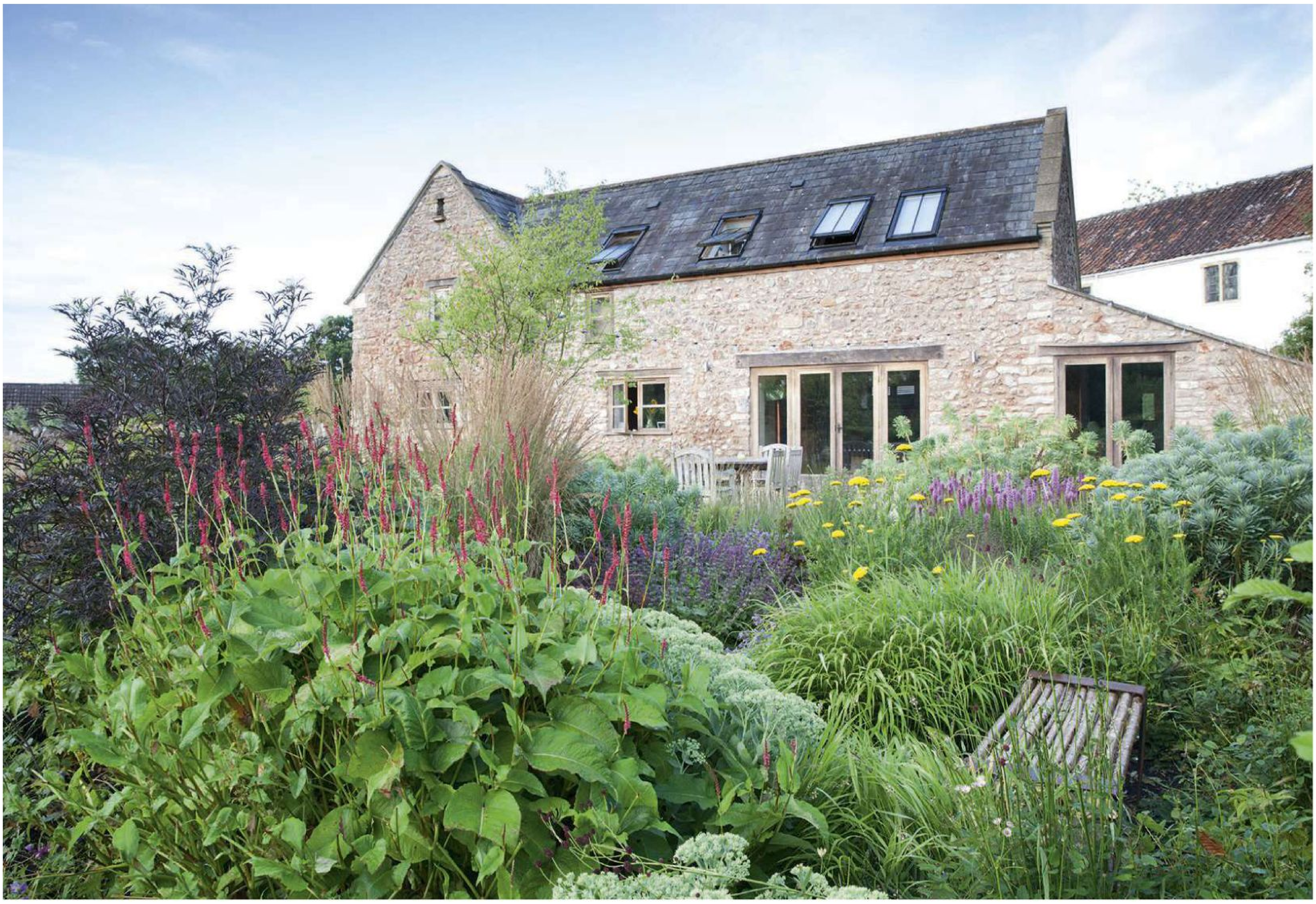
Name College Barn.
What Ecological country garden.
Where Somerset.
Soil Mixture of coal spoil and heavy clay.
Size Quarter of an acre.
Climate Cool temperate, with warm summers and minimum -7°C in winter.
Hardiness zone USDA 8b.

Orange *Helenium* 'Indianersommer' makes a vibrant contrast with *Verbena bonariensis*, both first-rate pollinator plants. Upright grass *Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster' develops a rhythm through the border.

A fine balance

Ecological concerns underpin an harmonious blend of perennial planting and vegetable garden in a naturalistic garden in Somerset

WORDS **NOEL KINGSBURY** PHOTOGRAPHS **REBECCA BERNSTEIN**



It is hard to believe that the area around Shepton Mallet was once a thriving and no doubt, hectic, noisy and polluted coal-mining district. The lush green of the surrounding wooded hills feels like an embrace for a Somerset village, but until the 1950s this was an active industrial neighbourhood. Indeed Alex Crossman and Jenni Weaver's house was originally the colliery pump house.

The two ecological consultants – whose workload includes carrying out the bat and badger surveys that developers often have to commission before planning permission is granted – came here in 2012, and started making the garden in 2014. They first opened their garden to the public under the National Garden Scheme an incredible two years later. Such rapid development speaks of good planning and, of course, perennials, which establish quickly.

The thriving clumps of perennials are what immediately seize the attention, and the neat, but still young, hornbeam hedges with views of the surrounding hills greeting the gaze above them. The woods and hills are an important part of Alex and Jenni's sense of belonging here. "It's part of our sense of ownership, and that inspires us," says Jenni. "We feel surrounded by the woods, and our hedges seem to disappear into the trees, connecting the garden to the landscape. We feel we need to frame everything," adds Alex, by way of explanation.

While the hills frame the garden's surroundings, the hedges do so internally, and make an effective backdrop for the perennials. They also divide the garden into smaller spaces, which has the effect of making the whole seem a good deal larger than the quarter-acre it really is. The couple are, not surprisingly, Piet Oudolf fans. "We went to the Oudolf garden at Hauser & Wirth [in nearby Bruton, Somerset] the first week it opened," says Alex. "We've been to the High Line [in New York] as well, which blew us away, and we also went to the Netherlands and managed to see the Oudolfs' garden in Hummelo shortly before it closed to visitors."

Alex and Jenni have successfully translated the Oudolfian style into a much smaller space than the celebrated Dutch garden designer ever works with now. The key is surely using a limited number of plants and repeating them.

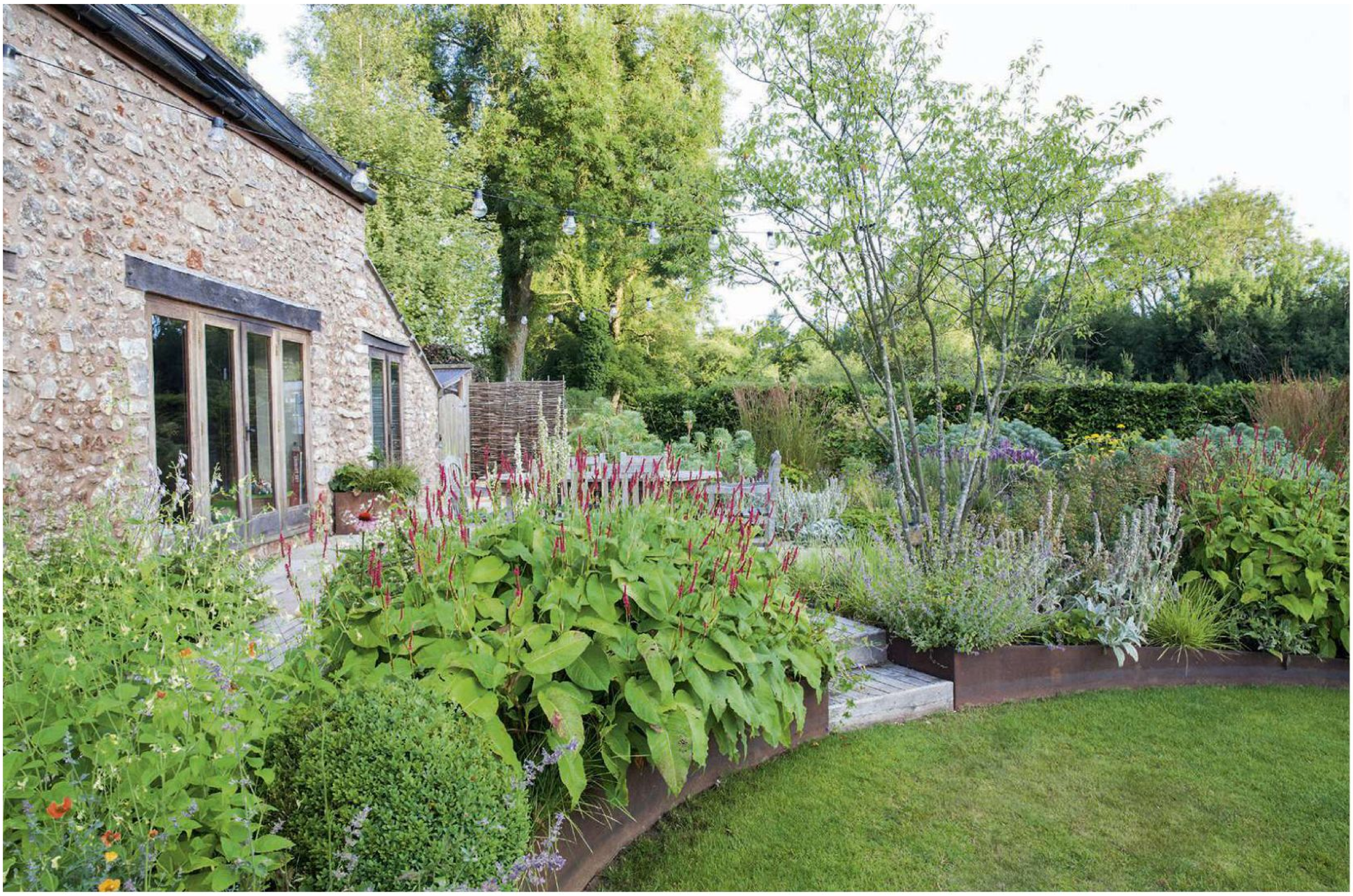
Working to a tight budget, the couple were able to buy multiples of plants from wholesale suppliers Orchard Dene and the nearby Arvensis Perennials, and continue ▷

Above *Persicaria amplexicaulis* 'Firedance' forms a solid clump in the front garden, flourishing in the heavy soil, and flowering for much of the late-summer season. Yellow comes from *Achillea* 'Hella Glashoff', pink from the spikes of *Liatris spicata* and violet-blue from *Nepeta subsessilis*.

Right The ivory spikes of *Verbascum chaixii* 'Album' are dotted through this area of planting. The thistly leaves are those of *Cirsium rivulare* 'Atropurpureum', which have now mostly finished flowering.

A perennial meadow in the making

Beyond the perennial plantings near the house, in a lower part of the garden, is an area of rough grass, including several locally uncommon, wildflower species into which cultivars of *Eupatorium*, *Aster* and *Geranium* have been planted. By late summer the grass is very rank and the perennials find it difficult to compete, but Alex and Jenni are keen to persist in developing a wildflower meadow with added perennials. Ideally, such a meadow would be on poor soil; low phosphorus soils in particular reduce grass growth, allowing for a better balance with perennials. Where this is not possible there is another solution, which Alex and Jenni are planning to try – sowing with yellow rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) in the autumn to parasitise and weaken the grasses the following spring, thus shifting the balance towards flowering wild species and perennials. Garden perennials grown in grass can flourish but will always be smaller than when grown in borders where there is less competition. Geraniums are often the most successful, as they make early growth that enables them to compete effectively.



▷ to propagate plants themselves. *Calamagrostis* x *acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster' makes a very effective rhythm plant here, more original are some clumps of *Symphyotrichum novae-angliae* 'Violetta', which, pre-flowering, forms bushy clumps and gives real stability. Unusually for an aster, it seems to keep its lower leaves well.

To one side of the house is the kitchen garden. Clearly very productive, with chard, runner beans, sweetcorn, leeks and peas, there are also plenty of flowers: dahlias, sunflowers and sweet peas. The atmosphere is very much one of a traditional cottage garden – primarily for vegetables but with flowers shoehorned in wherever there is space. "We have just one raised bed in the kitchen garden that is almost hidden," says Jenni. "Sam, our three-year-old, loves eating raw peas from there."

Jenni points out that she and Alex both work at home and so they are able to do odd half hours in the garden; it makes all the difference. Growing vegetables inevitably involves a lot of organisation, and an ability to keep on top of tasks quite different from those involved in the management of contemporary, ornamental, perennial plantings. "We had a veg chart on a whiteboard at one point," says Jenni, but adds that "veg growing conflicts a bit with what I like doing. I'm more about wildness and Alex is more into the technical and control side of things."

Jenni and Alex's work as ecological consultants certainly makes them more aware of the importance of the garden for biodiversity: "We have wilder parts of the garden and we try to keep local species such as marsh thistle [*Cirsium palustre*] and corky-fruited water dropwort [*Oenanthe pimpinelloides*]. It is always a question we have, about how wild we should be."

Creating a garden where aesthetic pleasure and biodiversity are balanced is perhaps one of the great challenges of the age. In rural surroundings and with a keen awareness of the wild world around them, Alex and Jenni have got this balance right. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address College Barn, Benter, Oakhill, Radstock, Somerset BA3 5BJ.
Tel 01761 232605. **Website** ngs.org.uk
Open Annually under the National Garden Scheme as part of Benter Gardens. In 2020 the garden will open 18 July, 2-6pm and 12 September, 3-7pm.

This page
Above A box ball adds some traditional structure, flanked on the left by the delicate, pale-yellow flowers of *Nepeta govaniana*, a very different plant from the more familiar *Nepeta* species, and on the right by *Persicaria amplexicaulis* 'Firedance' and the flower spikes of *Stachys byzantina*.

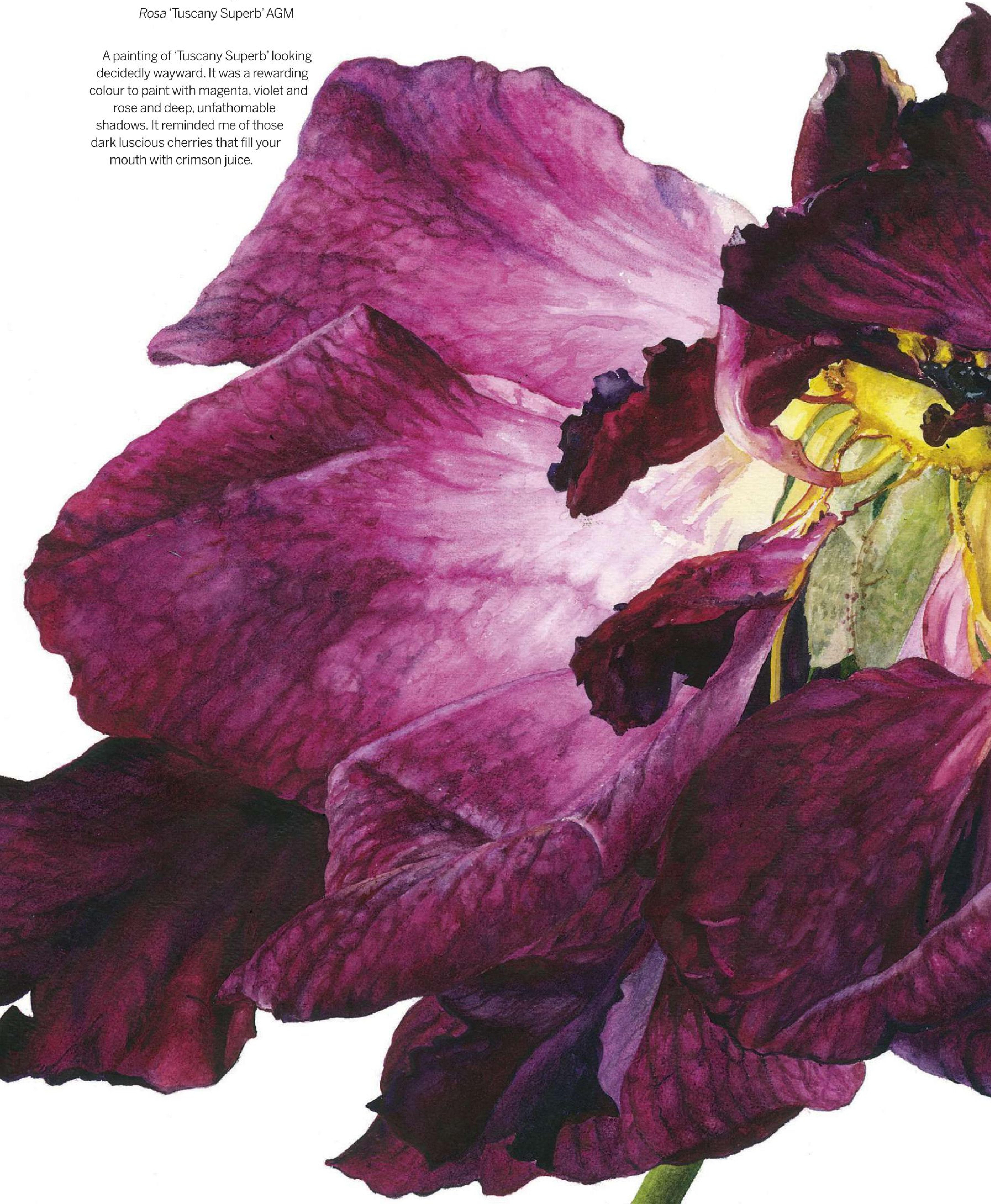
Facing page
Top The borders in front of the house, looking south, with clumps of *Calamagrostis* x *acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster' and orange *Helenium* 'Orange Summer'. Spring-flowering *Euphorbia characias* subsp. *wulfenii* makes an impact with its clumps of grey foliage, and scarlet *Knautia macedonica* scatters itself through the centre.

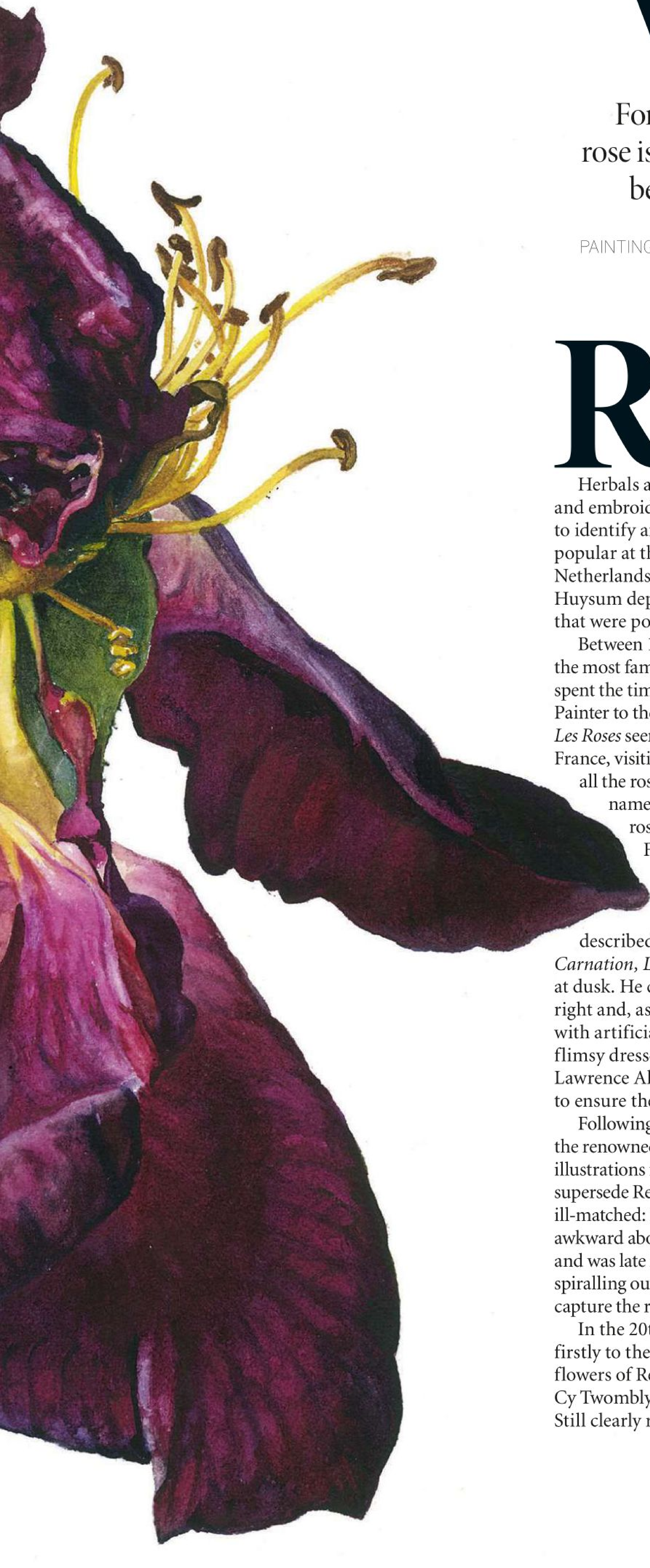
Below *Liatris spicata* forms a block in a central raised bed, backed by grey *Euphorbia characias* subsp. *wulfenii*. *Stachys byzantina* makes a silver splash along with *Origanum laevigatum* 'Herrenhausen' – one of the best late-summer plants for attracting bees.

'Red as cherry harvest'

Rosa 'Tuscany Superb' AGM

A painting of 'Tuscany Superb' looking decidedly wayward. It was a rewarding colour to paint with magenta, violet and rose and deep, unfathomable shadows. It reminded me of those dark luscious cherries that fill your mouth with crimson juice.





Vive la rose

For award-winning artist Rosie Sanders the rose is an enduring source of inspiration, as it has been for many artists throughout history

PAINTINGS AND CAPTIONS **ROSIE SANDERS** WORDS **JANE McMORELAND**

Roses appear in art sometimes simply as beautiful flowers but historically they were often used to impart extra meaning to the beholder. In paintings of the Madonna, a trellis of roses may represent a *hortus conclusus* or enclosed garden, and roses are frequently found winding their way round the edge of illuminated manuscripts, attractively and meaningfully.

Herbals and botanical volumes aimed for accuracy while flowers in fabric and embroidery often tended towards stylistic artistry. Sometimes it is possible to identify an exact cultivar as artists would often portray the flowers that were popular at the time. In the 17th-century still life paintings, especially in the Netherlands, aimed for realism, with artists such as Jan Brueghel and Jan van Huysum depicting all flowers but especially favouring the lush centifolia roses that were popular at the time.

Between 1817 and 1824 three books were published containing what are probably the most famous rose paintings: Redouté's *Les Roses*. Pierre-Joseph Redouté had spent the time of the Revolution quietly painting and in 1800 was appointed Flower-Painter to the Empress. Josephine undoubtedly inspired Redouté's *Les Liliacées* but *Les Roses* seems to have been an independent project. Redouté travelled all over France, visiting the best gardens, and the volumes contained detailed paintings of all the roses available in France at the time. Redouté obviously has had a rose named in his honour [*Rosa* Redouté (= 'Auspale')], a soft pink, English, old rose hybrid, bred by David Austin. Another 19th-century painter, Henri Fantin-Latour, reputedly favoured roses above other flowers and has a centifolia-type pink rose [*Rosa* 'Fantin-Latour'] named after him.

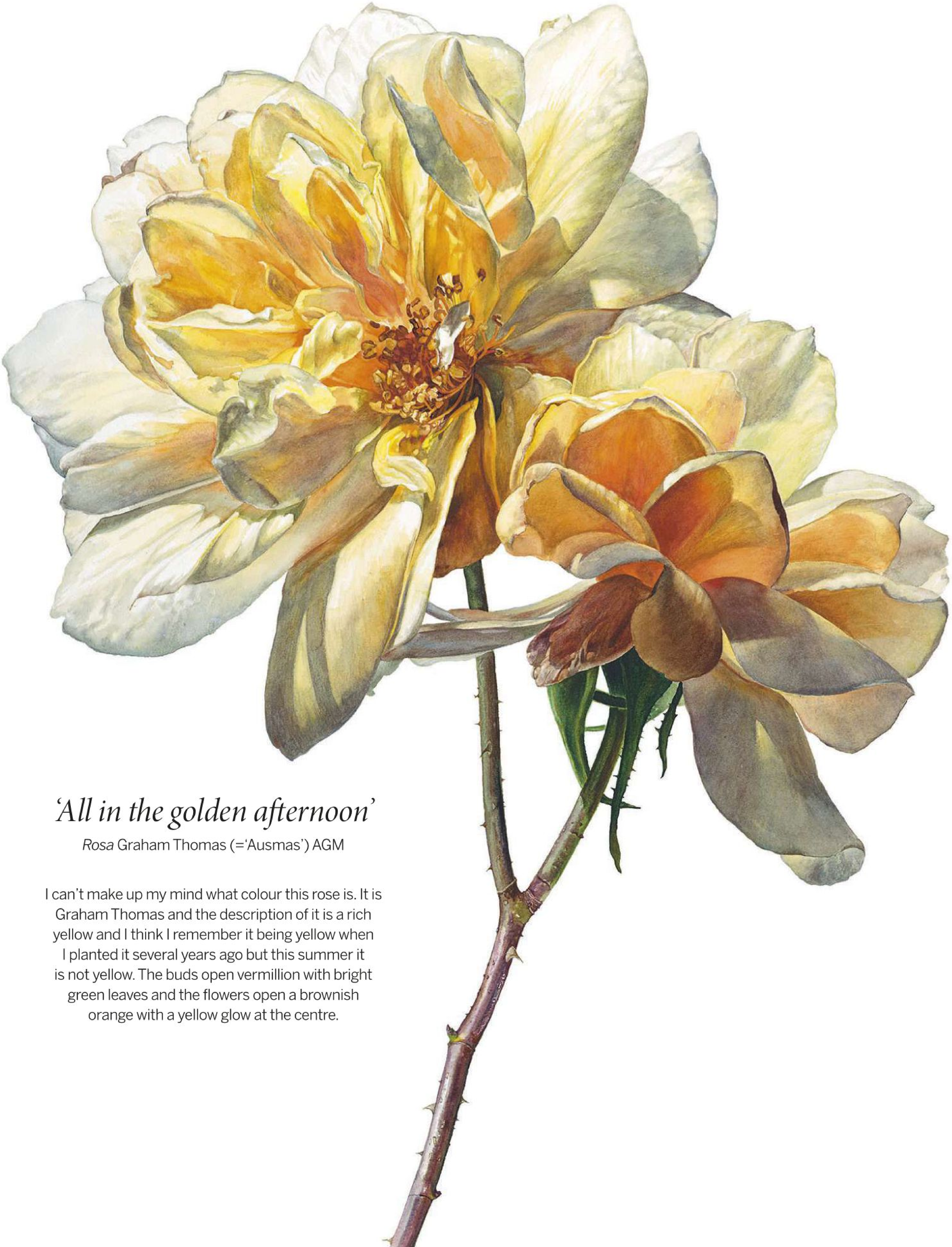
Pre-Raphaelites painted dog roses and other wild briars while Monet planted and painted roses at Giverney. John Singer Sargent described the problems of painting roses from life when he was working on *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose* in 1885-6, which depicts two girls in a flower garden at dusk. He could only work for a short time each day when the light was exactly right and, as autumn approached, the real flowers were increasingly replaced with artificial ones and the girls donned woollen vests under their romantically flimsy dresses. While he was painting *The Roses of Heliogabalus* in 1888, Lawrence Alma-Tadema had roses sent from the South of France every week to ensure the painting's realism.

Following the tradition of Redouté, Alfred Parsons was commissioned by the renowned horticulturist Ellen Willmott (of Warley Place in Essex) to provide illustrations for her book *The Genus Rosa*. Her plan was that the book would supersede Redouté's work but the couple seem to have been spectacularly ill-matched: Parsons objected to Miss Willmott's dictatorial manner and became awkward about the reproductions of his paintings, she kept changing her mind and was late in supplying the text and John Murray, the publisher, saw his costs spiralling out of control. Eventually the book was published in 1910 but failed to capture the rose-growers' interest or make Miss Willmott her much-needed fortune.

In the 20th century artistic depiction of roses moved away from the botanical, firstly to the more stylised shapes of Art Nouveau and then to the surrealist flowers of René Magritte and the giant works of Georgia O'Keeffe and Cy Twombly, whose richly coloured flowers are literally human-sized. Still clearly roses but far removed from Redouté's botanical images. □

Turn the page for more of Rosie's paintings ▷

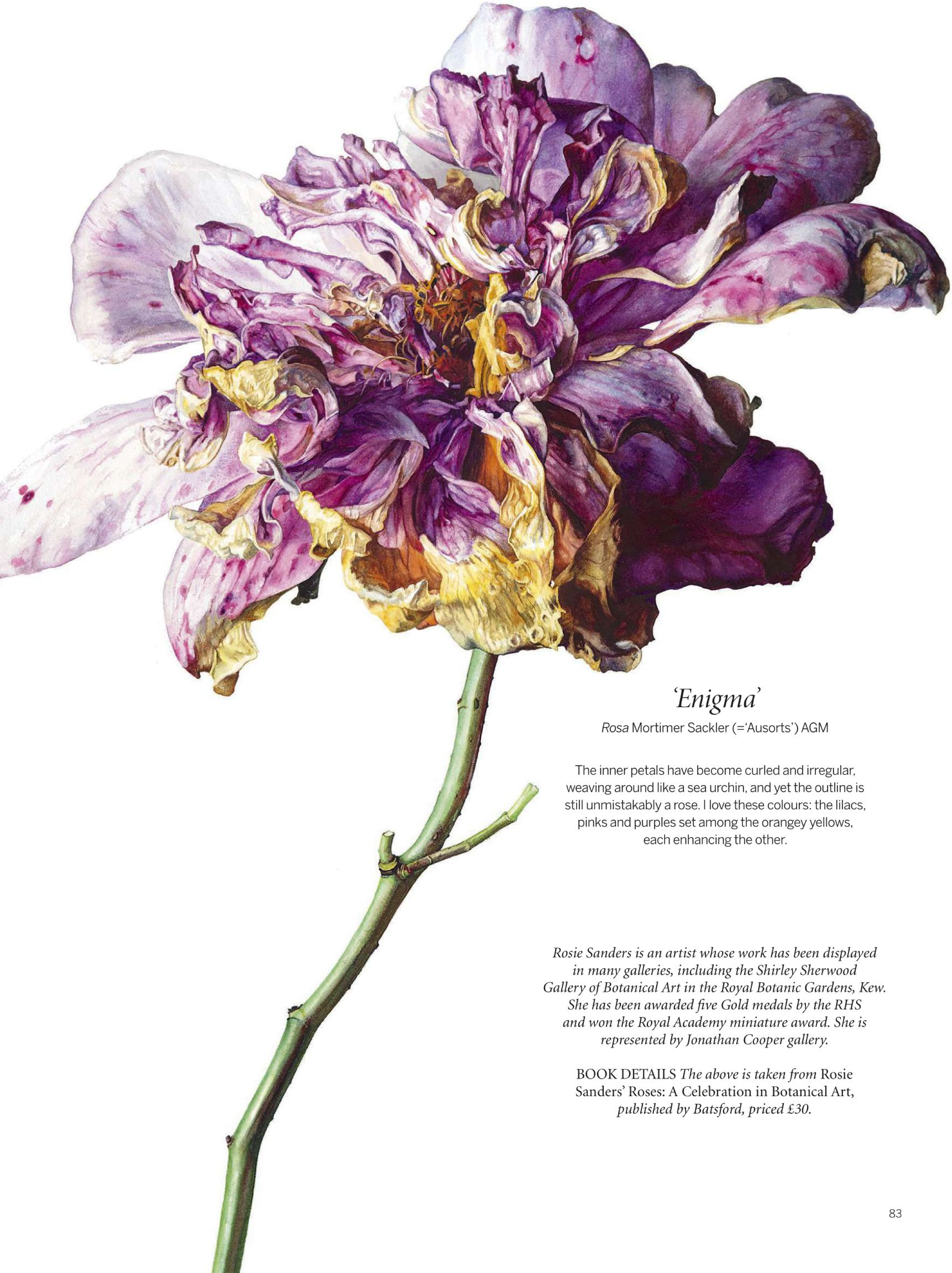
Lawrence Alma-Tadema had roses sent from France every week to ensure his painting's realism



'All in the golden afternoon'

Rosa Graham Thomas (='Ausmas') AGM

I can't make up my mind what colour this rose is. It is Graham Thomas and the description of it is a rich yellow and I think I remember it being yellow when I planted it several years ago but this summer it is not yellow. The buds open vermillion with bright green leaves and the flowers open a brownish orange with a yellow glow at the centre.



'Enigma'

Rosa Mortimer Sackler (='Ausorts') AGM

The inner petals have become curled and irregular, weaving around like a sea urchin, and yet the outline is still unmistakably a rose. I love these colours: the lilacs, pinks and purples set among the orangey yellows, each enhancing the other.

Rosie Sanders is an artist whose work has been displayed in many galleries, including the Shirley Sherwood Gallery of Botanical Art in the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. She has been awarded five Gold medals by the RHS and won the Royal Academy miniature award. She is represented by Jonathan Cooper gallery.

BOOK DETAILS *The above is taken from* Rosie Sanders' Roses: A Celebration in Botanical Art, *published by Batsford, priced £30.*

Britain’s best organic nurseries

Creating a garden that is both beautiful but also ecologically balanced and teeming with wildlife should be every gardener’s aim, but gardening sustainably starts with sourcing the plants and products for our gardens. Here we celebrate those nurseries that are already embracing organic and more sustainable practices

WORDS SORREL EVERTON

EDULIS NURSERY BY ANNAÏCK GUITTENY

> “We are the largest consumer of pot plants in the EU, which leads to some 500 million plastic pots being distributed every year in the UK.”
>
> **DAVID WARE, EDIBLECULTURE**

BLUEBELL COTTAGE NURSERY

Owner Sue Beesley was the winner of BBC Gardener of the Year in 2006 and took on the nursery and garden, located on the Trent & Mersey Canal, the following year. Plants include 700 kinds of perennials from garden favourites to more unusual options. Although not certified organic, the nursery propagates most of its own plants and uses only peat-free compost to pot on plants. For those who are anxious to avoid neonicotinoids, no chemical pesticides are used and customers are welcome to return pots to the nursery for re-use. Alternatively, you can de-pot your plant at the counter and take it home wrapped in paper. Mail order is also plastic free.

Bluebell Cottage, Lodge Lane, Dutton, nr Warrington, Cheshire WA4 4HP. Tel 01928 713718, bluebellcottage.co.uk. Mail order available. Nursery open from March to October. Check website for exact opening dates and times.

EDIBLECULTURE

Working hard to pioneer innovation, Edibleculture is proud to promote itself as a plastic-free champion. Plants are transferred to little cardboard sleeves called POSIpots for customers to take home. Peat-free composts are available in a bag-for-life form, and a selection of seeds and feeds are sold by weight. Sprays and seaweed feeds are sold in returnable glass bottles and you’re encouraged to write your own plastic-free plant label. The nursery offers a wide range of perennials, edibles, fruit trees and houseplants, all grown peat- and pesticide-free.

The Horticultural Unit, The Abbey School, Faversham, Kent ME13 8RZ. Tel 01795 537662, edibleculture.co.uk. Open Monday to Saturday, 9am-5pm, Sundays and Bank Holidays, 10am-4pm. Note its seasonal schedule detailing what plants and stock is available when – see website or call for information.

EDULIS

Known for its excellent selection of rare plants, and plants for sustainable, edible food growing, Edulis (pictured left) is owned by Paul Barney, who trained in permaculture and organic farming systems and worked at the Centre for Alternative Technology in Wales before setting up his own design and nursery business. Although Edulis is not certified organic, Paul runs the nursery with an environmental approach to include the re-use of pots, collection of rainwater for irrigation and use of biological controls.

The Walled Garden, Tidmarsh Lane, Pangbourne, Berkshire RG8 8HT. Tel 01635 578113/07802 812781, edulis.co.uk. Mail order available. Open Tuesday to Wednesday, 11am-4pm. Or, by appointment. Check website for open days and events/shows Edulis is attending. Closed November to January.

GWYNFOR GROWERS

A small nursery located on the west Wales coast, growing perennials and vegetable plants. The nursery holds a National Collection of rosemary. It also specialises in fruit trees – particularly Welsh heritage fruit. Plants are produced on the nursery or sourced in the UK and are grown in peat-free compost using organic methods and the most sustainable pots possible. The nursery has areas actively managed for nature conservation, and many of the plants stocked are beneficial for pollinators and wildlife.

Pontgarreg, Llandysul, Ceredigion SA44 6AU. Tel 01239 654151, gwynfor.co.uk. Mail order available. Open Wednesday and Thursday, 10am-6pm.

HARDY’S COTTAGE GARDEN PLANTS

An award-winning nursery with a fantastic selection of plants that is now moving towards a more eco-friendly approach by using biodegradable pots and packaging for mail order, plus customers are encouraged to return plastic pots to the nursery for re-use.

Priory Lane Nursery, Freefolk Priors, Whitchurch, Hampshire RG28 7FA. Tel 01256 896533, hardysplants.co.uk. Mail order available. Opening times vary through the year, please check before travel.

HIPPOPOTTERING NURSERY

Award-winning, including five-times Chelsea gold-winning, acer specialist that grows its trees in peat-free soil, using organic principles. Orchard House, East Lound, Haxey, Doncaster South Yorkshire DN9 2LR. Tel 07979 764677, hippopotteringmaples.co.uk. Open by appointment, regular shows exhibitor.

JEKKA’S

Home to the largest collection of culinary herbs in the UK, Jekka McVicar’s herb farm was established more than 30 years ago as a resource for herbs for food, health and well-being. Throughout that time, plants have always been raised using vegan and peat-free composts, and with organic and sustainable principles that promote biodiversity and a natural ecosystem, to encourage as many insect pollinators as possible. Soil is replenished with bio fungus and plants fed with liquid seaweed.

Rose Cottage, Shellards Lane, Alveston, Bristol BS35 3SY. Tel 01454 418878, jekkas.com. Herbs available to buy online and then collected from farm – or purchased at open days or masterclasses, see website for calendar of events.

JOHN CULLEN GARDENS

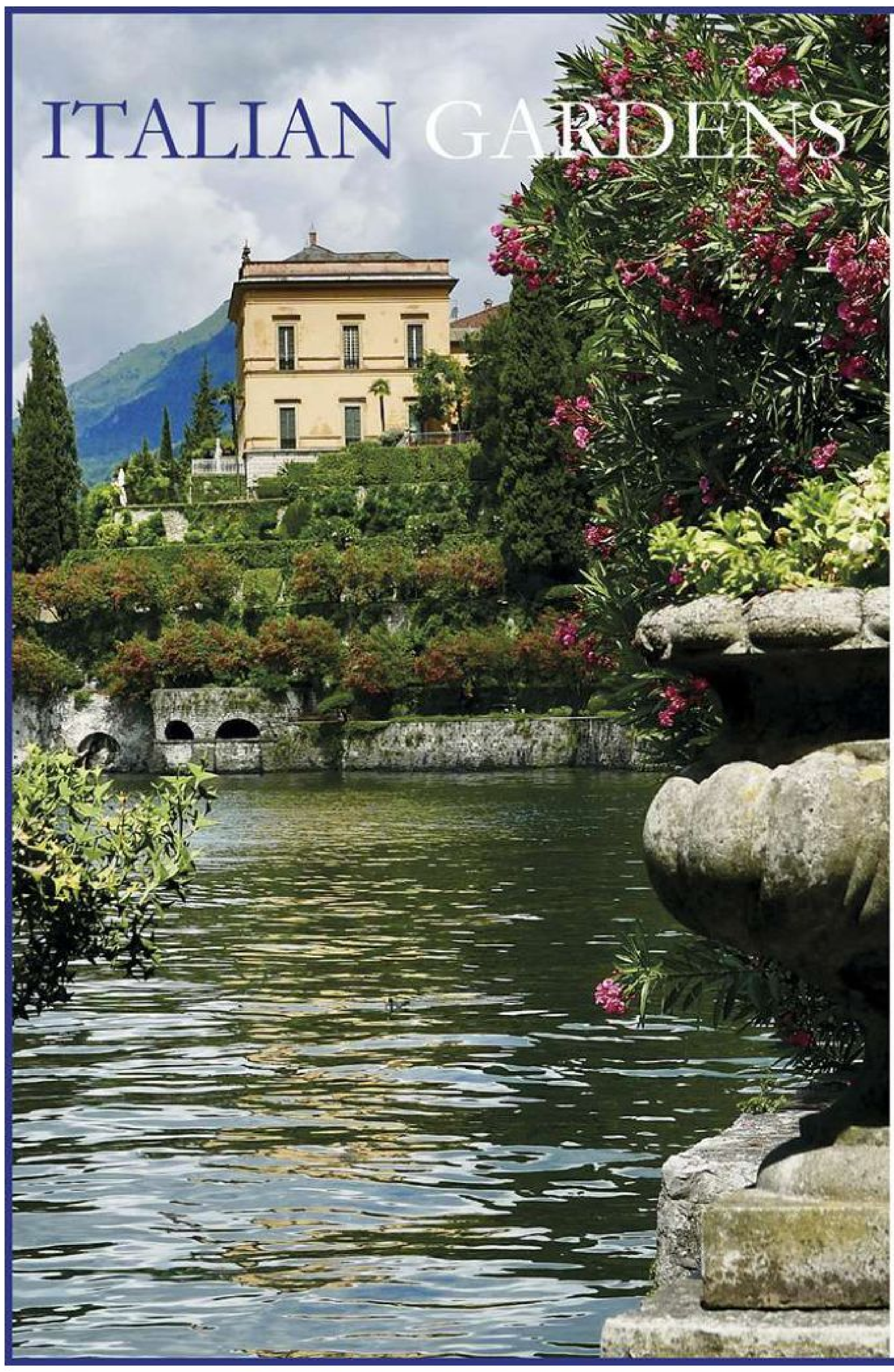
Based in rural Lincolnshire, this nursery specialises in scented and edible plants, and plants for pollinators, so good to know that the nursery is chemical free with no neonicotinoids used on its plants. It creates its own mulch from food and plant waste and harvests its own rainwater. Black plastic pots are being replaced by recyclable taupe pots and no single-use plastics are used in packaging. As an added touch all the regular clippings from the nursery’s herbs are dried for its own teas and pot pourri mixes.

Eagle Lodge, Archers Lane, Algakirk, Lincolnshire PE20 2AG, Tel 01205 460567, johncullengardens.com. Mail order available. Nursery open by appointment Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm, or see at garden shows and events.

PEAT FREE PLANTS

A small, family-run nursery, certified organic by the Soil Association and offering herbaceous perennials, alpines, bulbs and its own organic compost for sale on site or via mail order. All plants are grown in organic, peat-free compost and many have been raised from the nursery’s own organic stock (any plants that are not organic will not have the SA certificate). No artificial chemicals are used and packaging is re-used or recycled wherever possible, or from plastic-free options.

Peat Free Plants, Caves Folly Nurseries, Evendine Lane, Colwall, Worcestershire WR13 6DX. Tel 01684 540631, peatfreeplants.org.uk. Open Thursday to Saturday, 10am-5pm, from March to early October. ▷



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> “Our organic growing methods mean our plant nursery is teeming with wildlife. Newts, frogs and all manner of insects living and thriving in our nursery where the plants are grown.”
>
> **BRIDGET EVANS, PEAT FREE PLANTS**

▷ PENLAN PERENNIALS

All the plants from this nursery in west Wales are grown in peat-free soil to organic standards. The nursery specialises in hardy geraniums and ferns, as well as plants for woodland shade and moisture-loving plants, and it also stocks a good selection of cottage garden favourites. Plus, being ‘hard-grown’ outside, all plants are ready for planting out in the garden, and tried and tested as hardy.
Landre, Drefach, Llanybydder, Ceredigion SA40 9YD. Tel 01570 480097/07984 880241, penlanperennials.co.uk. Mail order available. Open by appointment Fridays, 1-6pm, Saturday to Sunday, 10am-5pm.

PLANTS, SHOOTS AND LEAVES

This Scottish nursery offers a range of unusual and rare, hardy perennials while specialising in epimediums and hardy geraniums. Most plants are propagated on from its own stock and grown in peat-free or locally produced compost, using recycled plastic pots wherever possible and without the use of artificial chemicals.
Dovecot Bungalow, Haddington, East Lothian EH41 4HA. Tel 01620 823536, plantsshootsandleaves.co.uk. Mail order available. Open by appointment April to October and for special open days.

POYNTZFIELD HERB NURSERY

A well-established nursery that is situated on the Black Isle, just north of Inverness, and which has been growing herbs organically and biodynamically since 1976. As well as growing native Scottish herbs, owner Duncan Ross describes himself as a herb hunter, collecting seed from alpine and sub-alpine areas where species are at risk of over harvesting, and cultivating them in the nursery to ensure their survival. The nursery’s extensive species list runs to some 400 varieties and is divided into helpful categories, such as aromatic, medicinal and herbs for various different growing conditions. The nursery aims for a closed system, producing its own compost from garden waste.
Black Isle, By Dingwall, Ross & Cromarty EV7 8LX. Tel 01381 610352, poyntzfieldherbs.co.uk. Mail order available. Open Monday to Saturday, 1-5pm, April to September, and Sundays (May to August), 1-5pm.

WADDOW LODGE GARDEN

From his own garden in Lancashire, experienced nurseryman Peter Foley offers a range of perennials for sale and mail order all produced with an environmental approach – all potting compost is peat-free, plant waste is composted for later use on the garden, flower pots are re-used, rainwater is harvested, solar panels are used to generate electricity and the use of chemicals is kept to a minimum. Peter and his wife Liz are also involved in Plant Heritage’s Plant Exchange scheme that works to ensure endangered plants are not lost to cultivation.
Waddow Lodge, Waddington, Clitheroe, Lancashire BB7 3HQ. Tel 01200 429145, gardentalks.co.uk. Mail order available. Open by appointment only – also under the National Gardens Scheme.

WALCOT ORGANIC NURSERY

Set up in 2000, Walcot has only ever specialised in organic fruit trees, starting out with a selection of cultivars that had been grown in and around the Vale of Evesham for years – long before the use of pesticides. The nursery now offers over 80 apple cultivars and more than 30 plum, gage and damson cultivars along with pears, cherries and quinces. Certified by the Soil Association, Walcot also manages its land on a five-year rotation, leaving land fallow and adding organic matter before re-cropping to ensure the sustainability of the soil.
Walcot Lane, Drakes Broughton, Pershore, Worcestershire WR10 2AL. Tel 01905 841587, walcotnursery.co.uk.
Open Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm, and Saturdays (October to April), 10am-1pm.

NOTE: To be approved as organic, a nursery must be certified by one of the UK’s nine certification bodies – and only then can display certification.

ONLINE SUPPLIERS

DELFLAND

A long-standing nursery that produces vegetable plug plants for farms, smallholders and allotment associations but also offers smaller quantities for gardeners. The nursery has held a Soil Association certificate for more than 20 years with all its mail-order plants grown in peat-free compost with the help of beneficial insects to control pests. For small orders, plants are removed from their growing trays or whole trays can be posted; boxes and filler are 100 per cent biodegradable.
Tel 01354 740553, organicplants.co.uk for small packs for gardeners, delfland.co.uk. for plants by the tray.

ORGANIC BULBS LTD

Small but perfectly formed selection chosen by designers Lulu Urquhart and Adam Hunt. All bulbs have been grown without chemicals or pesticides and have been chosen as suitable for naturalising, and with the aim of extending the flowering season to benefit insects as early in the season as possible and later in the season to provide a seamless transition.
Tel 01373 888720, organicbulbs.com.

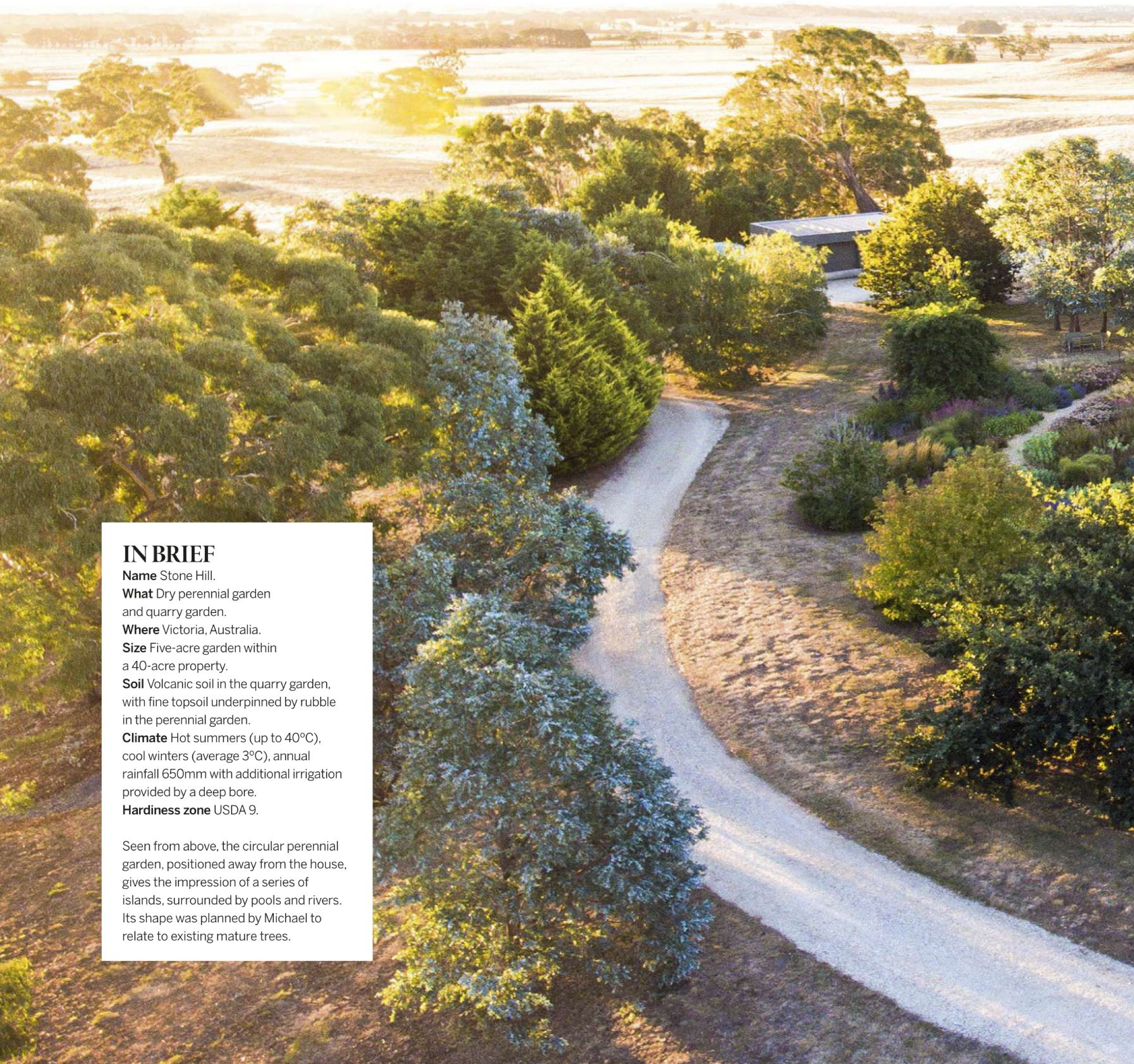
ORGANIC GARDENING CATALOGUE

Extensive catalogue of organic gardening supplies available to view via printed catalogue or online. The company has been selling seed suitable for organic growing for more than 50 years, offering both organic and non-organic seeds – in this case non-organic means the seeds have come from plants grown by a non-organic grower, but will not have been treated or coated with chemicals. None of its offerings are from genetically modified seed or plant material. Also sells organic composts, pest controls and other gardening supplies.
Tel 0344 967 0330, organiccatalogue.com.

MAIL ORDER SEED SUPPLIERS

Organic seeds are becoming more easily available. It’s always worth searching for options with your regular seed company of choice, or here’s a list of companies that are already offering good options:

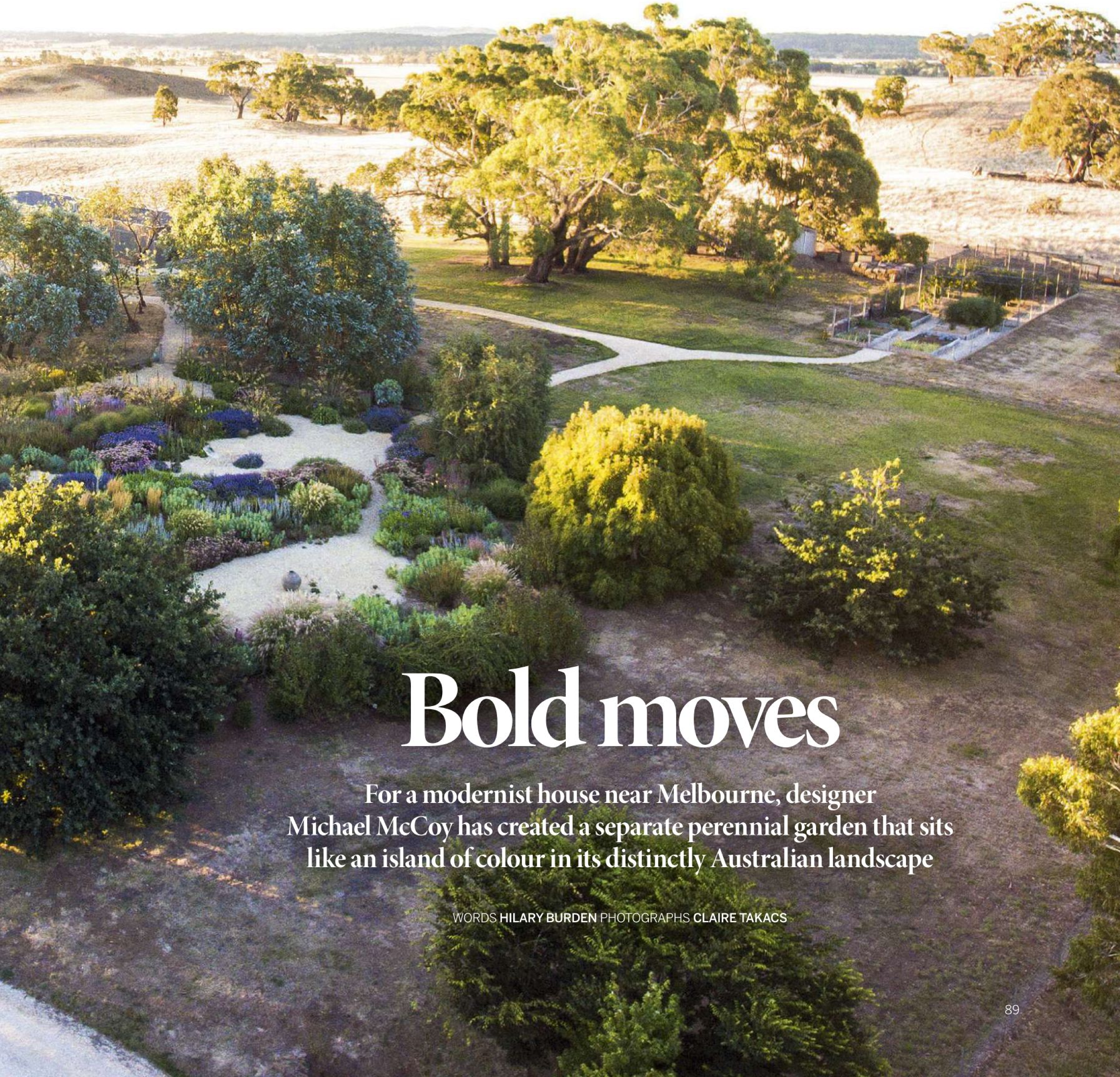
- **Mr Fothergills Seeds** Tel 0333 777 3936, mr-fothergills.co.uk – many popular choices.
- **Real Seeds** Tel 01239 821107, realseeds.co.uk – open pollinated seeds.
- **Seed Co-operative** Tel 01775 840592, seedcooperative.org.uk – open pollinated varieties adapted to organic growing.
- **Suttons** Tel 0344 326 2200, suttons.co.uk – 27 new varieties added to its range this year.
- **Tamar Organics** Tel 01579 371087, tamarorganics.co.uk – vegetables, herbs, flowers, green manures and more.



IN BRIEF

Name Stone Hill.
What Dry perennial garden and quarry garden.
Where Victoria, Australia.
Size Five-acre garden within a 40-acre property.
Soil Volcanic soil in the quarry garden, with fine topsoil underpinned by rubble in the perennial garden.
Climate Hot summers (up to 40ºC), cool winters (average 3ºC), annual rainfall 650mm with additional irrigation provided by a deep bore.
Hardiness zone USDA 9.

Seen from above, the circular perennial garden, positioned away from the house, gives the impression of a series of islands, surrounded by pools and rivers. Its shape was planned by Michael to relate to existing mature trees.



Bold moves

For a modernist house near Melbourne, designer Michael McCoy has created a separate perennial garden that sits like an island of colour in its distinctly Australian landscape

WORDS **HILARY BURDEN** PHOTOGRAPHS **CLAIRE TAKACS**

Australia is a country that likes to embrace new ideas. Perhaps inspired by the modernist houses that are the hallmark of Australian architect Glenn Murcutt, Australians seem more open than many of their UK counterparts to the idea of making a bold statement with the architecture of their house. This certainly seems true of Gerald and Sue Moriarty, whose house, some 39 miles northwest of Melbourne, is a strikingly elegant modular design with clean lines and floor-to-ceiling windows that make the most of the property's spectacular views out over the Mount Macedon Ranges and the mysterious Hanging Rock.

For their garden the couple wanted to make an equally bold statement. Inspired by the gardens created by the likes of Piet Oudolf, Wolfgang Oehme and James van Sweden, and by Keith Wiley's garden, Wildside, the couple wanted to create a dry perennial garden that would complement the house, and they commissioned designer Michael McCoy to come up with a plan. From the start one thing both Michael and his clients were agreed on was that the house should sit in an uncluttered, unplanted space.

"You don't build a bold, minimalist house and work hard to soften it," says Michael. Instead, Michael has kept both the perennial garden – and the quarry garden that followed – very deliberately out of view of the house, as both destinations and locations in their own right.

In the first of these, the perennials have been planted edge to edge, waist to chest height. Surrounded by trees and shrubs, this enclosed, almost circular garden was inspired in part by the walled gardens that were once found in almost every country estate in the UK, but this is a far more informal affair with billowing euphorbias, escaping foxgloves, and beds that are not borders. Within the garden, Michael

> **From the start one thing both Michael and his clients were all agreed on was that the house should sit in an uncluttered, unplanted space**

worked on the planting-design principle that at any point whatever plant is immediately in front of you is echoed four or five times into the distance. Each plant is also there in your peripheral vision, so that no single strong colour dominates the planting or draws your eye to one place.

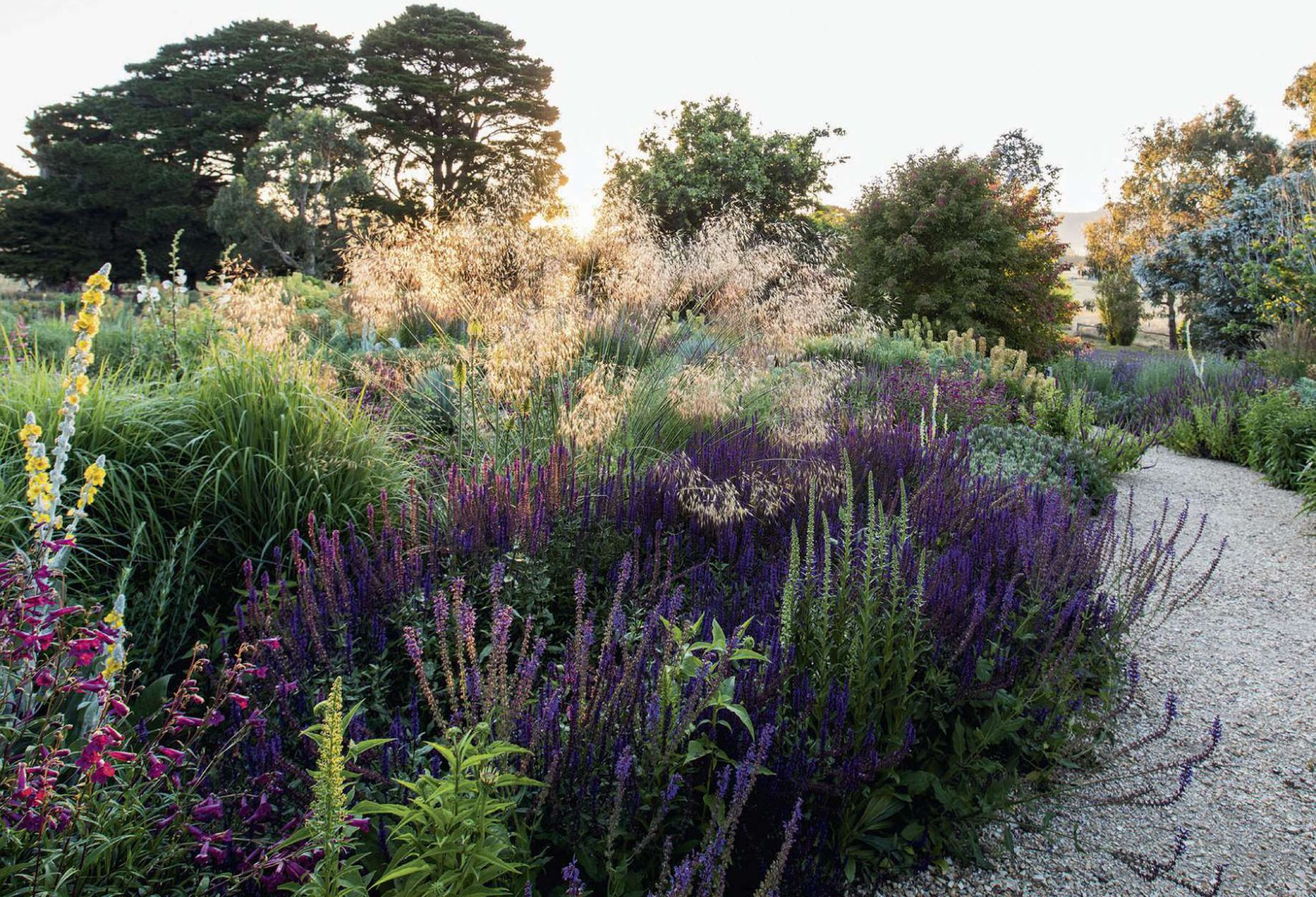
In Australia, designing with perennials is challenging, especially in terms of colour palette, because available plants are extremely limited, but for Michael, who at the start of his gardening career, lived and worked at Great Dixter learning from the late, great Christopher Lloyd, this was all part of the challenge. "There is such a thing as too much choice," he says. "Limitation can be liberating."

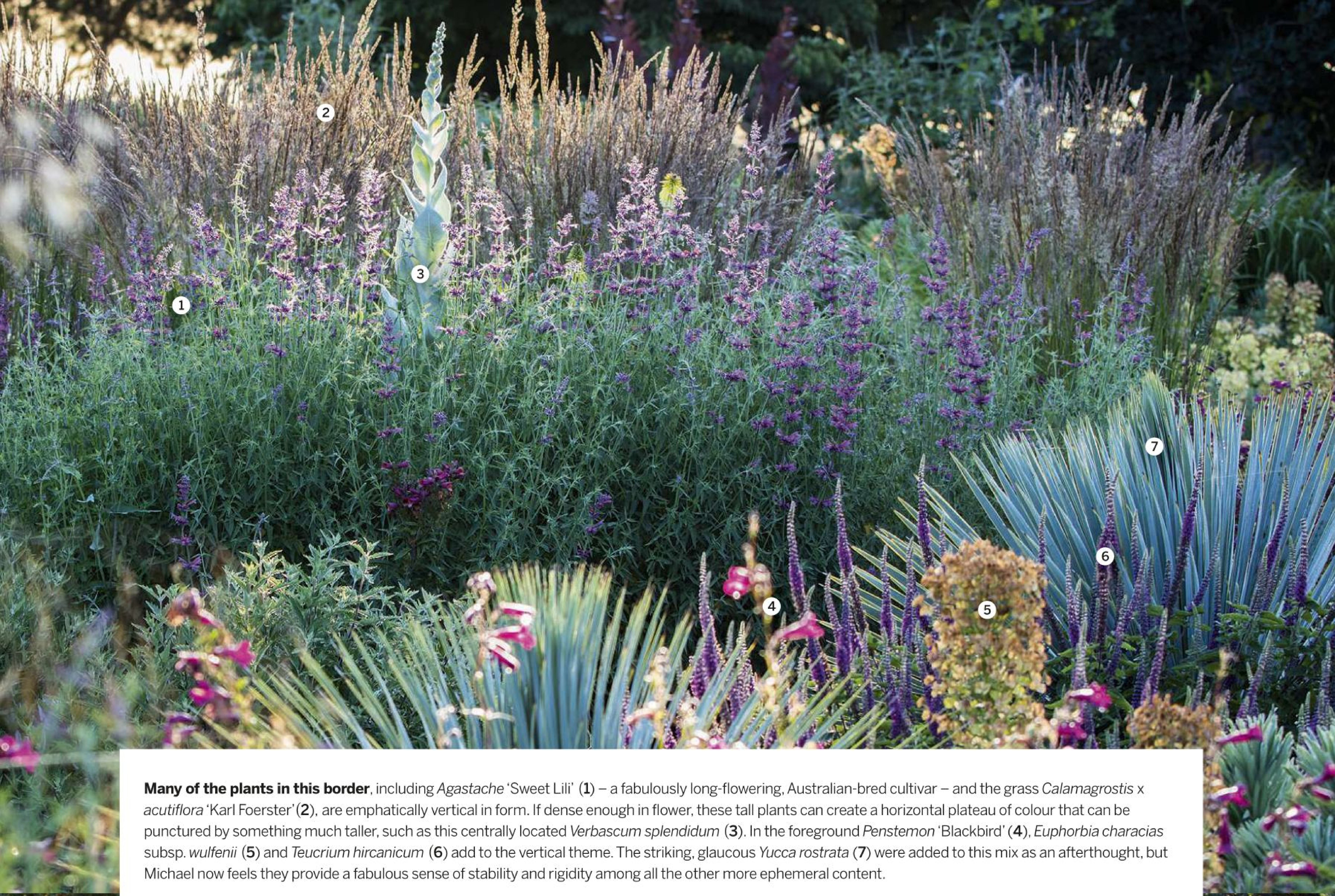
This Australian garden is more than the sum of its parts, and the planting perhaps owes as much to intangible qualities as to the plants themselves. Without measuring, shapes emerged from the existing

To continue turn to page 96 ▷

Left The house, an award-winning modular concept by Melbourne-based design company Intermode, was built concurrently with the garden. It sits on a northwest-facing slope, overlooking a vast, mesmerising landscape. Rather than building a retaining wall, the rock face exposed in excavating the house site was pressure-hosed and left to create a natural 'stairway' where pools gather after the rains, and in spring *Narcissus bulbocodium* self-sow between the cracks.

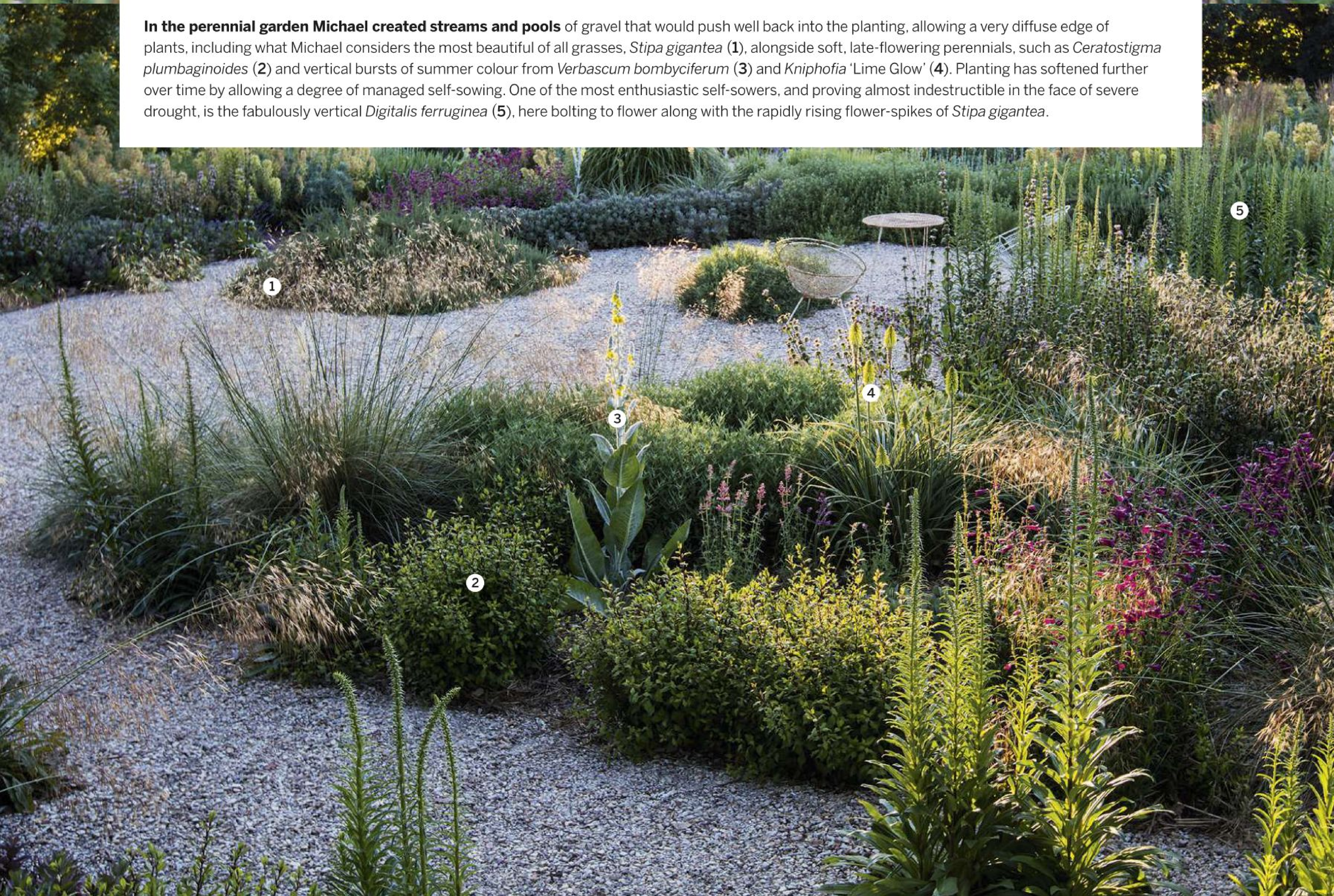
Below In the Oudolfian-style perennial garden, Michael has created islands of dense, perennial planting to form a waist-high, solid, undulating plateau that is punctured every now and then by plants that rise above it. Here, the beautiful golden heads of *Stipa gigantea* rise gracefully from the centre of the bed above the richly coloured purple *Salvia nemorosa* 'Caradonna', offset by the fresh green of the switchgrass *Panicum virgatum* and honey-coloured spires of *Digitalis ferruginea*.

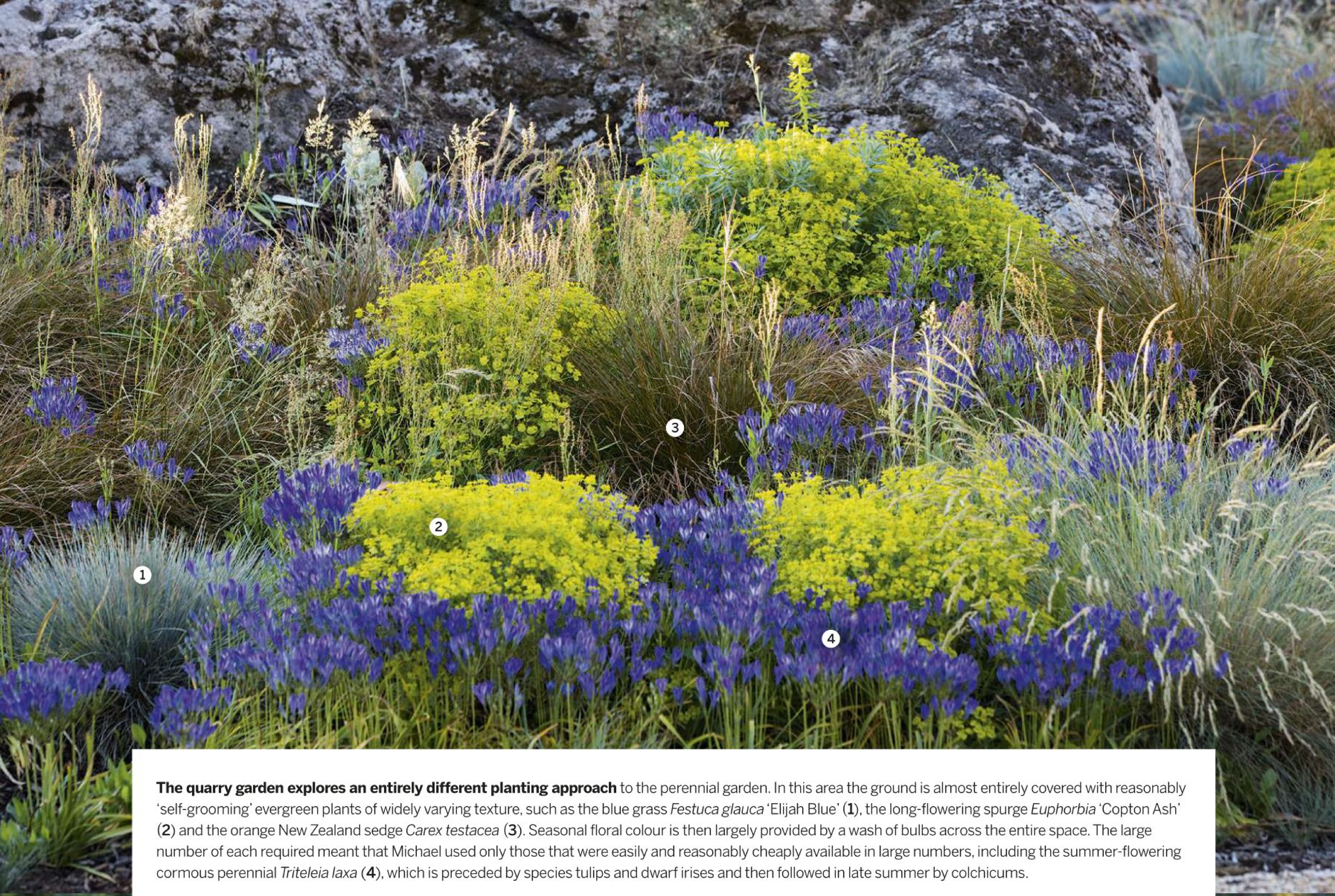




Many of the plants in this border, including *Agastache* 'Sweet Lili' (**1**) – a fabulously long-flowering, Australian-bred cultivar – and the grass *Calamagrostis* x *acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster' (**2**), are emphatically vertical in form. If dense enough in flower, these tall plants can create a horizontal plateau of colour that can be punctured by something much taller, such as this centrally located *Verbascum splendidum* (**3**). In the foreground *Penstemon* 'Blackbird' (**4**), *Euphorbia characias* subsp. *wulfenii* (**5**) and *Teucrium hircanicum* (**6**) add to the vertical theme. The striking, glaucous *Yucca rostrata* (**7**) were added to this mix as an afterthought, but Michael now feels they provide a fabulous sense of stability and rigidity among all the other more ephemeral content.

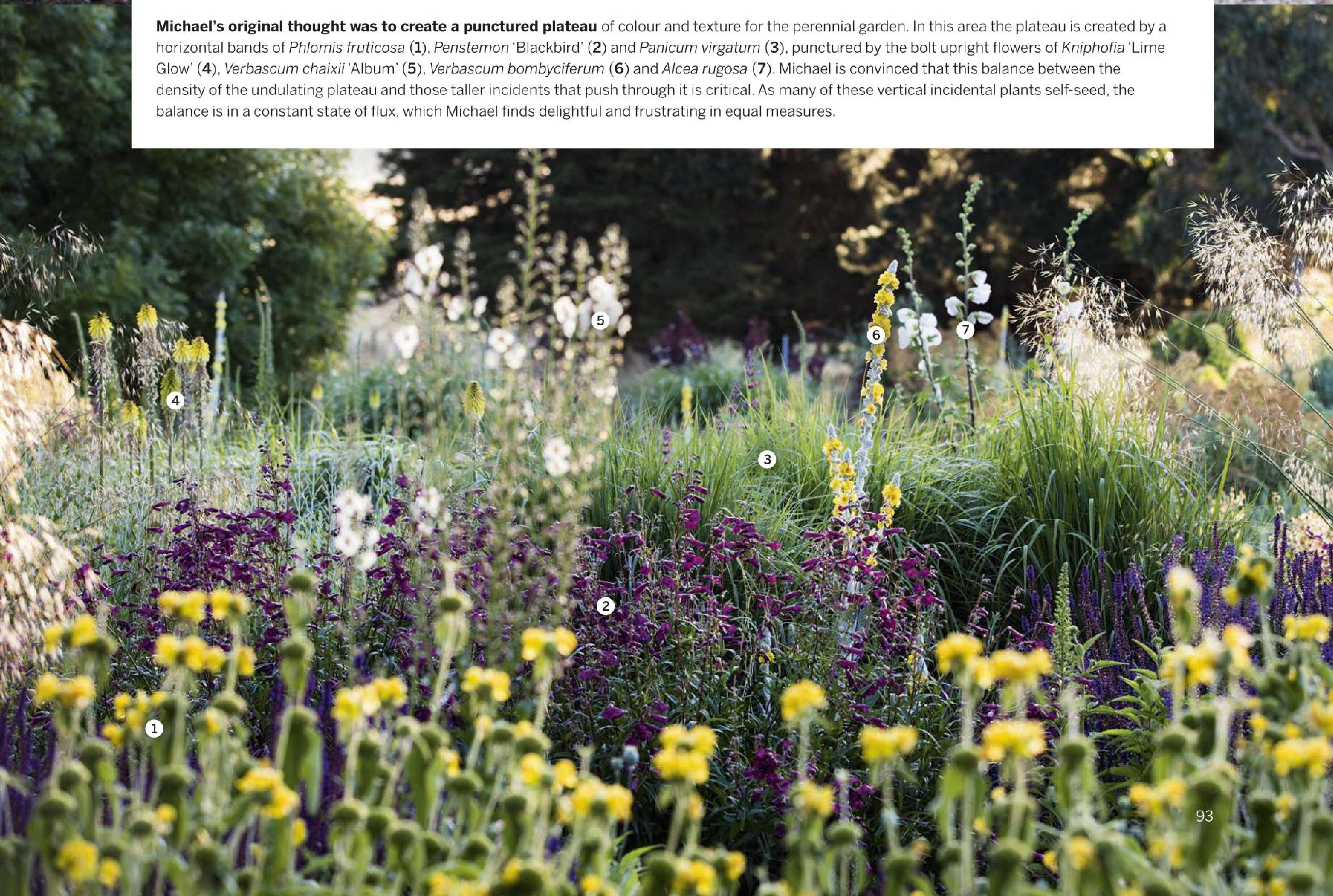
In the perennial garden Michael created streams and pools of gravel that would push well back into the planting, allowing a very diffuse edge of plants, including what Michael considers the most beautiful of all grasses, *Stipa gigantea* (**1**), alongside soft, late-flowering perennials, such as *Ceratostigma plumbaginoides* (**2**) and vertical bursts of summer colour from *Verbascum bombyciferum* (**3**) and *Kniphofia* 'Lime Glow' (**4**). Planting has softened further over time by allowing a degree of managed self-sowing. One of the most enthusiastic self-sowers, and proving almost indestructible in the face of severe drought, is the fabulously vertical *Digitalis ferruginea* (**5**), here bolting to flower along with the rapidly rising flower-spikes of *Stipa gigantea*.





The quarry garden explores an entirely different planting approach to the perennial garden. In this area the ground is almost entirely covered with reasonably 'self-grooming' evergreen plants of widely varying texture, such as the blue grass *Festuca glauca* 'Elijah Blue' (**1**), the long-flowering spurge *Euphorbia* 'Copton Ash' (**2**) and the orange New Zealand sedge *Carex testacea* (**3**). Seasonal floral colour is then largely provided by a wash of bulbs across the entire space. The large number of each required meant that Michael used only those that were easily and reasonably cheaply available in large numbers, including the summer-flowering cormous perennial *Triteleia laxa* (**4**), which is preceded by species tulips and dwarf irises and then followed in late summer by colchicums.

Michael's original thought was to create a punctured plateau of colour and texture for the perennial garden. In this area the plateau is created by a horizontal bands of *Phlomis fruticosa* (**1**), *Penstemon* 'Blackbird' (**2**) and *Panicum virgatum* (**3**), punctured by the bolt upright flowers of *Kniphofia* 'Lime Glow' (**4**), *Verbascum chaixii* 'Album' (**5**), *Verbascum bombyciferum* (**6**) and *Alcea rugosa* (**7**). Michael is convinced that this balance between the density of the undulating plateau and those taller incidents that push through it is critical. As many of these vertical incidental plants self-seed, the balance is in a constant state of flux, which Michael finds delightful and frustrating in equal measures.



Inspired in part by a walled garden, the perennial garden is more informal with billowing euphorbias and escaping foxgloves

In late summer the perennial garden becomes a rich tapestry of subtle colour. Deep-blue pools of the aptly named *Caryopteris* x *clandonensis* 'Heavenly Blue' create a strong contrast with the pale-pink of *Hylotelephium* 'Matrona', while the rich pink of *Agastache* 'Sweet Lili' contrasts subtly with the pale blue of *Perovskia atriplicifolia*.

▷ volcanic ground, gifting Michael with a sense of their own being. Perhaps the most successful example of this was what the excavation of the house's setting itself revealed: the underlying rock, which Michael has kept and enhanced to create a striking natural feature.

By looking at aerial photos, Michael recognised natural openings and closings in the inherited tree layout and traced systems of pathways and big bowls of planting within the existing trees. "My central passion is the idea of creating and manipulating spaces," he says. "In this case simply through the judicious removal and retention of the existing trees, it was possible to create a garden that would buckle and fold within existing canopies."

Even though the garden is in one of the coldest parts of Australia, with temperatures regularly falling below zero in winter but with warm to hot summers, the reasonable rainfall helped only by minimal summer irrigation, means that the plant choice has, according to Michael, proven to be "crazily successful".

Instead of borders of perennials graded into heights, the visitor is engulfed in a raised undulating ground plane, varying from knee to chest height, where every plant becomes a pattern contribution rather than an ornamental individual plant. "Though occasionally being gently veiled by taller diaphanous grasses, your view over the space is never entirely blocked," explains Michael. "So the eye skims over the surface of a tapestry of foliage and flowers."

In the quarry garden, built at Sue's suggestion on the site of an old quarry, Michael's guiding planting principle has been to create a low, permanent matrix of evergreen plants that includes both grasses and herbaceous perennials. These mounds of varying degrees of crispness are then given a seasonal wash of colour from a succession of different bulbs. White anemones kick off the display in spring, followed by two species of tulip, purple dwarf irises, several different species of allium and a deep-blue flowering

cormous perennial *Triteleia laxa* in midsummer before these make way in late summer and early autumn for the arrival of colchicums and the beautiful white *Lilium philippinense*.

A final touch has been a *Cornus controversa* placed near the front door. “It was the clients’ choice, against my advice,” says Michael. “But it has succeeded in the way you would expect a tree that is silently invested in proving me wrong to succeed.”

Whether you consider this to be a European garden in an Australian setting, or an Australian garden that uses exotics is irrelevant. Stone Hill is a garden that works, informally, with what was already there. Its designer has left his ego at home and chosen a planting design that enhances a magical sense of place. □

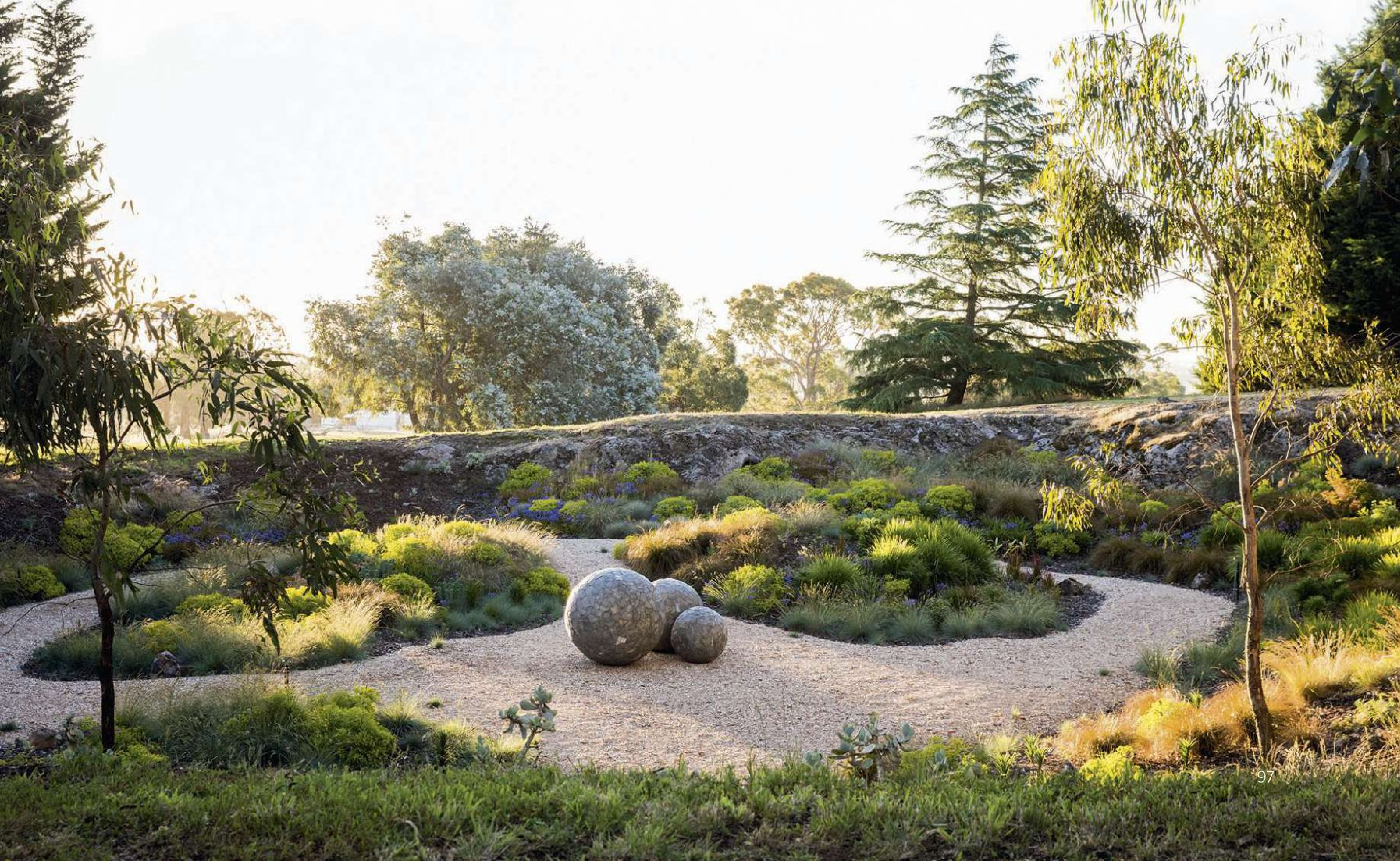
USEFUL INFORMATION

Find out more about Michael McCoy’s work at **thegardenist.com.au**

Left Michael was initially concerned about adding the three *Yucca rostrata* plants to the perennial garden but has since grown to love their steely solidity in the midst of the soft grasses and perennials. Their glaucous foliage combines subtly with the purple flowers of *Penstemon* ‘Blackbird’ and their exotic shape works well with the upright flowers of *Euphorbia characias* subsp. *wulfenii*.

Below in his design for the quarry garden, from where rocks for the local roads were quarried from the 1920s, Michael has aimed to acknowledge the site’s past use. Planting follows the existing contours of the rock faces and is never more than knee height so as not to obscure the rocks. Among this mix of low-growing plants are grasses, including the grass-like iron grass and carex, along with seasonal bulbs, succulents, and low-growing *Euphorbia myrsinites* and *Euphorbia rigida*.

In the quarry garden Michael has created a low, permanent matrix of evergreen plants given a seasonal wash of colour from a succession of different bulbs



ALL I WANT IS THE SEA AND A LITTLE COTTAGE JUST TO BE

For those seeking spectacular coastal views combined with rural tranquillity, then Treverra Cottage, in the popular North Cornish resort of Rock, is an ideal holiday location

This charming 19th century farm cottage sleeps up to 8 and has been recently renovated and decorated with an eclectic mix of British and Scandinavian antiques. Set in a 14-acre site of fields and beautifully landscaped gardens, the property sits just above Porthilly Cove with views across the Camel Estuary to the picturesque fishing port of Padstow.

Despite its quiet location, the local beaches and amenities of Rock are all within easy reach, either by car or via the local network of footpaths. That is, if you can drag yourself away, as on site facilities include a tennis court, jacuzzi and spectacular 15 metre, oval infinity pool. There is also a fully equipped wet room for all your beach kit, a vegetable garden to help yourself from, not to mention plenty of peaceful spots to sit and admire the view.

Adjacent to the cottage is a little double bedded studio that can added in to the rental or taken on its own off-peak, as a perfect cosy retreat.

Prices start from £1,500 for a short break in the cottage and £70 a night in the studio.

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ONE MAN'S PASSION

Designer Tom Stuart-Smith reveals his favourites from the garden books in his collection

PHOTOGRAPHS **ANDREW MONTGOMERY**

SOWING BEAUTY
Gardens of Persia
PLANTS IN GARDEN HISTORY
LUNUGANGA

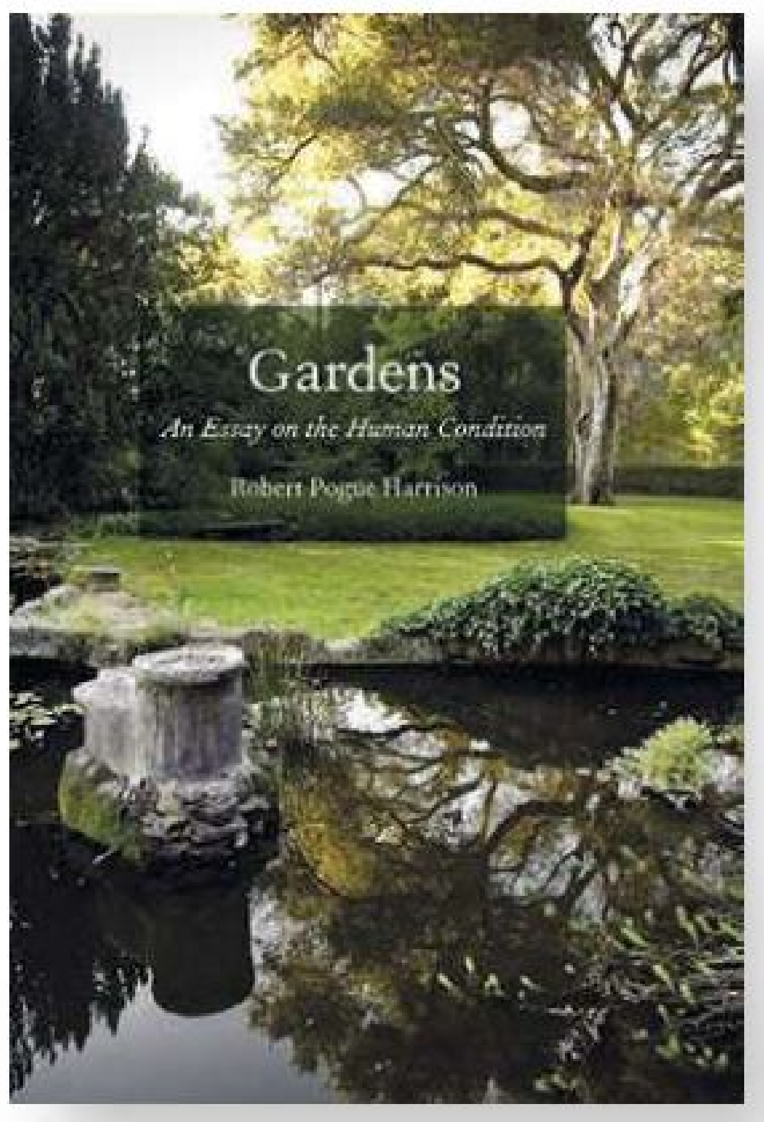
> *"I love nothing more than a good catalogue... Reading about plants that I don't quite know never loses its allure"*

BOOKS SPECIAL

ROBERT POGUE HARRISON Gardens AN ESSAY ON THE HUMAN CONDITION
TREES & SHRUBS HARDY IN THE BRITISH ISLES
W.J. BEAN
II D-M
EIGHTH EDITION
JOHN MURRAY
CASH BOOK
JAMES HITCHMOUGH SOWING BEAUTY
Gardens of Persia
PENELOPE HOBHOUSE
LUIGI DAMI THE ITALIAN GARDEN
PLANTS IN GARDEN HISTORY Penelope Hobhouse
LUNUGANGA
GEOFFREY BAWA
CHRISTOPH BON
DOMINIC SANSONI
The Private Gardens of England
Edited by Tania Compton
CONSTABLE
I A
EIGHTH EDITION
JOHN MURRAY

I didn't read much when I was young, but caught the bug after I left school and was travelling and on my own a good deal. Now I feel that a part of me isn't functioning if I don't have a good book on the go. I'm also married to a voracious reader and we often swap books. Sue has assembled a large library, principally of psychoanalysis, poetry and philosophy, much of it for research into her book *The Well Gardened Mind*, which she has been working on for about five years and comes out next year – so many fascinating books have come out of that journey. The most interesting of these are not gardening books at all, but they touch on what we do and why we do it, which has always interested me rather more than reading about how we do it. I've just finished Iain McGilchrist's *The Master and his Emissary*, a book on the right brain-left brain divide that throws light on so many of our existential problems from the personal to the geopolitical. I have quite a good collection of historical gardening books, some at home and some in our studio in London, which I have shared with my friend, the garden designer Todd Longstaffe-Gowan, for about 25 years. He asks me about plants, I quiz him on classical symbolism and moulding details. Somehow it works. The only disadvantage of this arrangement is that I can never be sure whether one of my books is in London or at home and unlike Todd, I'm not a natural organiser of a tidy bookshelf. So a book on *Kniphofia* that I was hunting down yesterday was hiding under *Ancient Roman Gardens* and on top of *Norah Lindsay*. Quite a nice place to be, I suppose.

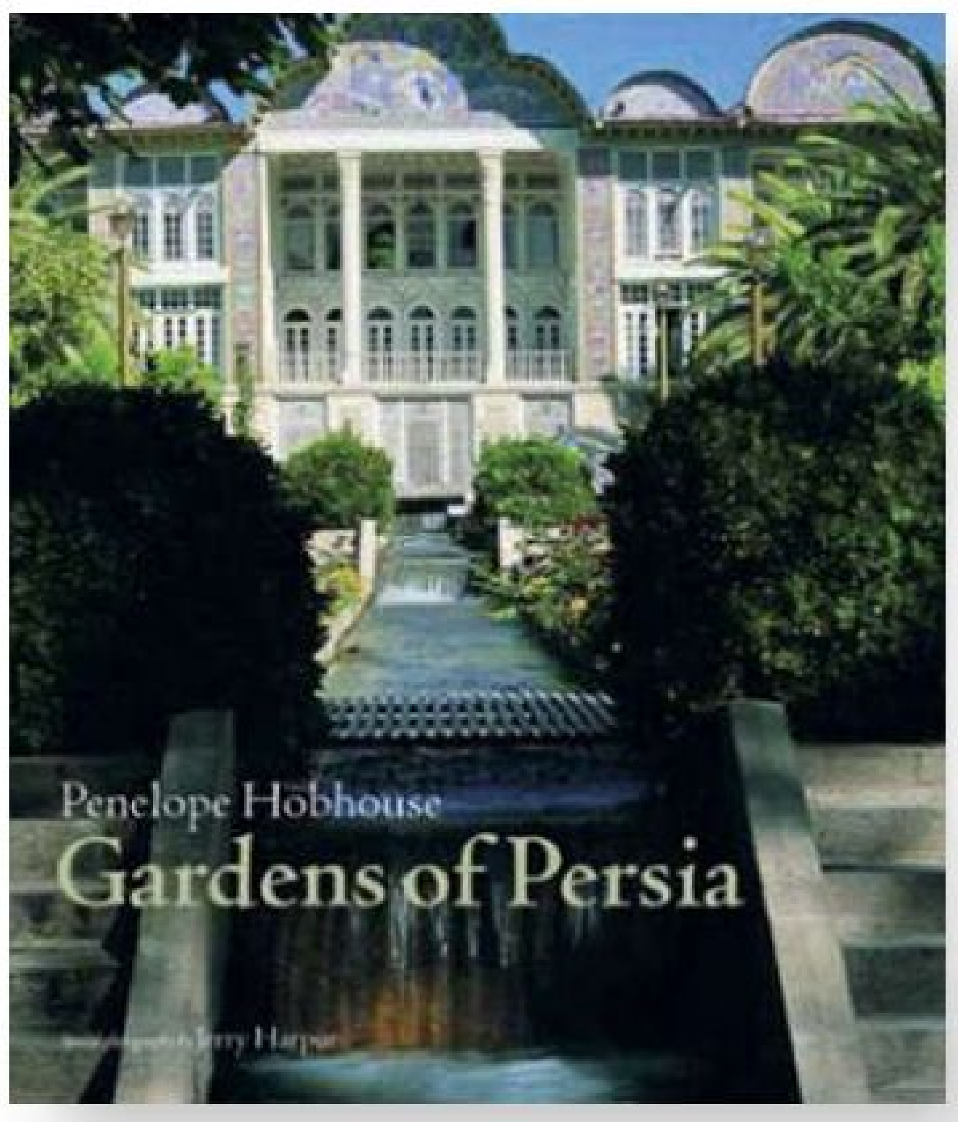
I don't read all that many books about contemporary gardening, but I love nothing more than a good catalogue, so I repeatedly turn to things, such as John Grimshaw's *New Trees*, a recent *Hillier Manual*, the Timber Press series on individual plant genera, the flowers of Crete, or of Greece and the Balkans. Then sometimes I dip into a great collection of American floras and other books on American gardens given to me by garden writer and designer Penelope Hobhouse. Reading about plants that I don't quite know never loses its allure.



GARDENS: AN ESSAY ON THE HUMAN CONDITION

by Robert Pogue Harrison
(University of Chicago Press, 2008)

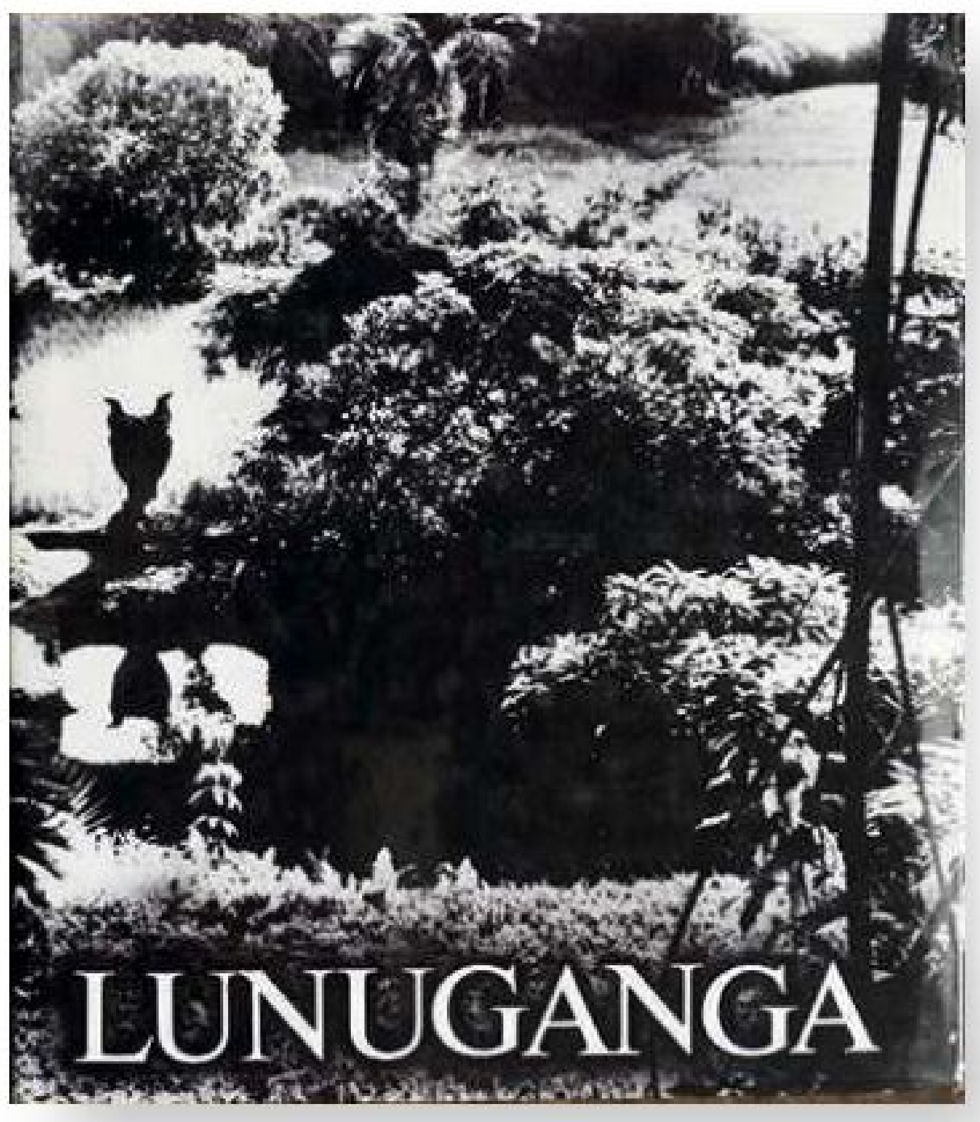
I think this is one of the most absorbing and intelligent accounts of why gardens and garden making is important to us. It is a book that articulates many of the things you have been thinking before but perhaps hadn't found words to express. Harrison's book on the place of forests in the imagination is equally good. He is a professor of literature at Stanford University and has a knack for showing how responses to the most fundamental human questions often emerge in the unlikeliest of places. He then has the ability to thread his findings together in a beguiling and persuasive web of thought.



GARDENS OF PERSIA

by Penelope Hobhouse
(Cassell, 2003)

I have to include one of the many excellent books by Penelope. She has been a friend and something of a mentor since I began designing in my early twenties. Amazing to think that she is now 90 – and still as sharp as a knife. I quite often find myself wondering what Penny would think when I'm about to cut a corner or compromise on some detail of design. Penny doesn't cut corners. This book is immensely readable, comprehensive and scholarly. I found myself referring to it often when designing the Jellicoe Garden, one of a number of public squares and gardens in King's Cross, which is due to open in 2021.



LUNUGANGA

by Geoffrey Bawa, Christoph Bon and Dominic Sansoni (Times New Edition, 1990)

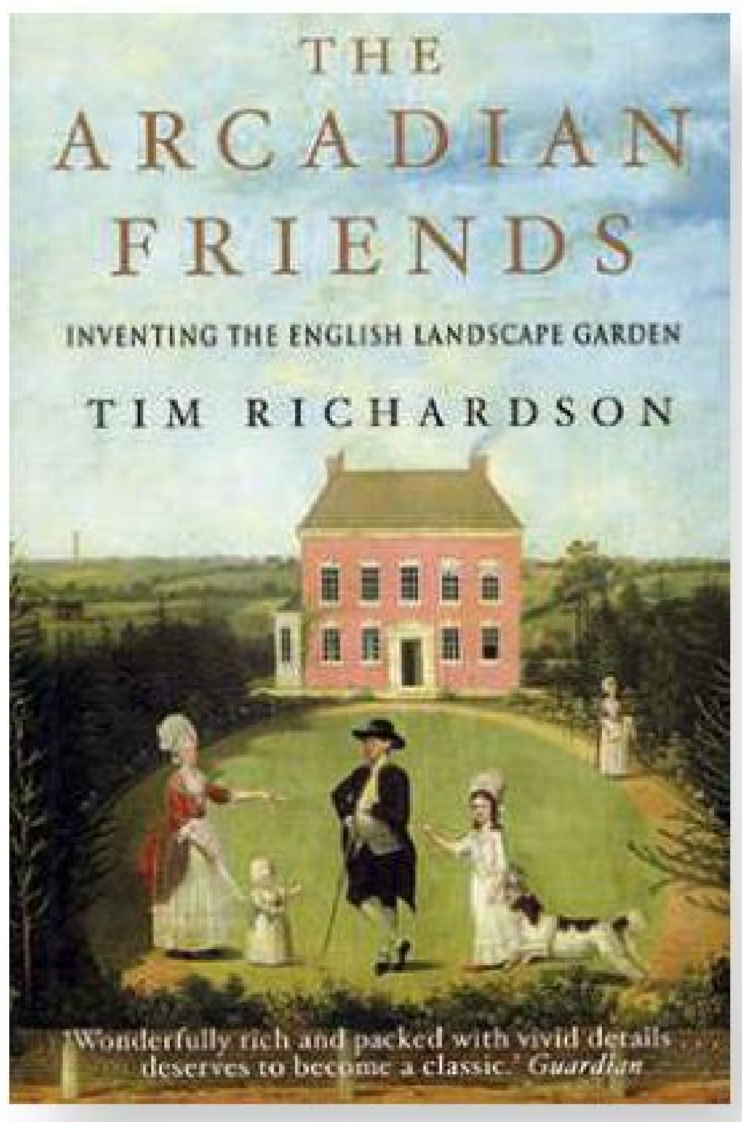
Visiting Lunganga, the estate of the late Geoffrey Bawa in Sri Lanka, was an unforgettable experience. The garden, which sometimes feels like a 20th-century, protomodernist, tropical Rousham, is haunted by the spirit of its creator Geoffrey Bawa and is perhaps his greatest work. Sue and I stayed there and slept in his old study. Sue had the most powerful vision of an old man sitting on the end of her bed. This book, with its high-contrast, black-and-white photographs, is a much more evocative memento than some glossy coloured thing. This is a place to see before you shuffle off this mortal coil.

Gardens is one of those books that articulates many of the things you have been thinking before

Gardens of Persia.

Lununganga.

BOOKS SPECIAL


THE
ARCADIAN
FRIENDS
INVENTING THE ENGLISH LANDSCAPE GARDEN
TIM RICHARDSON
'Wonderfully rich and packed with vivid details … deserves to become a classic.' Guardian

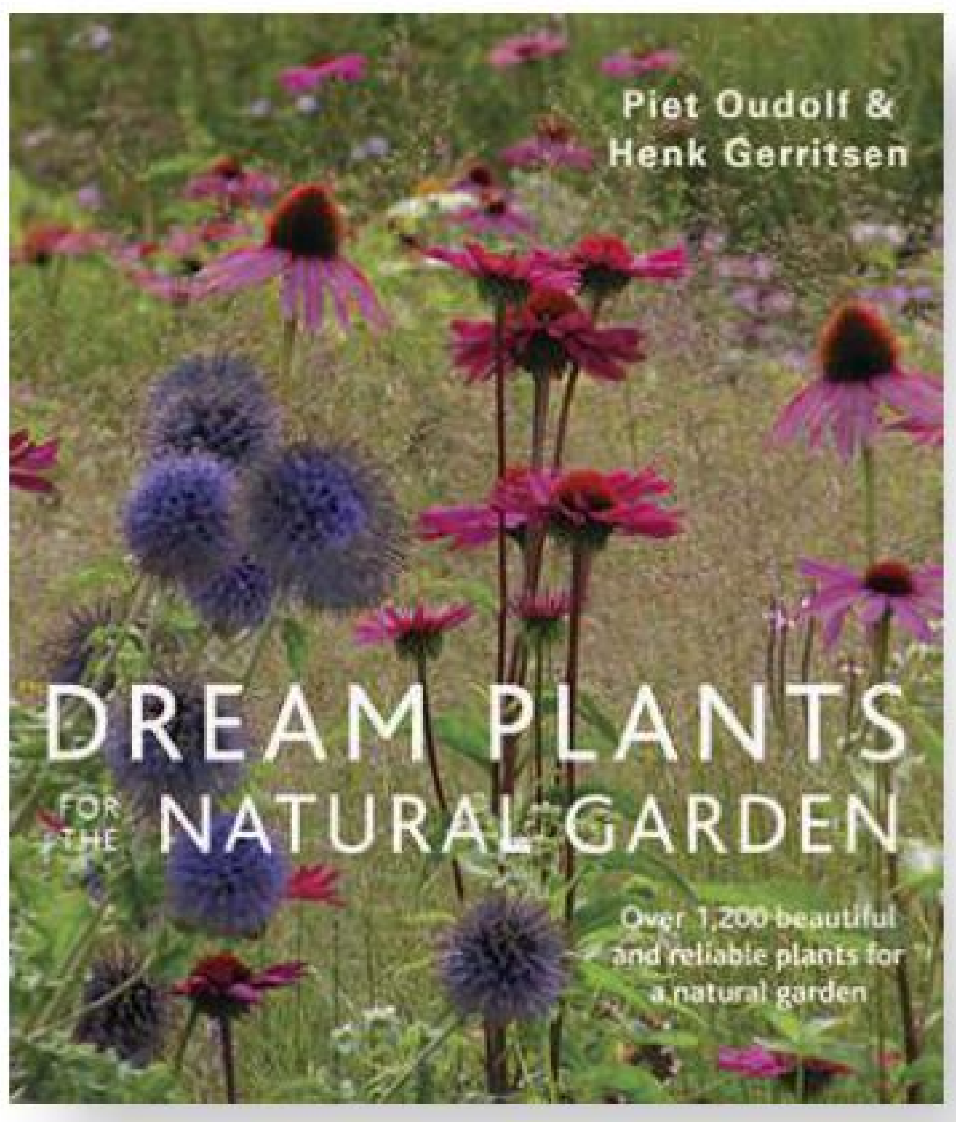
THE ARCADIAN FRIENDS: INVENTING THE ENGLISH LANDSCAPE GARDEN
by Tim Richardson
(Bantam Press, 2007)

An entertaining account of the birth of the neoclassical garden in England by one of our best garden writers who mixes meticulous scholarship with a taste for a rollicking good story. If I were to recommend any book about this period in landscape to someone coming to it reasonably fresh – who wanted to know the cultural and political ins and outs of the landscape movement in Britain in its most interesting and intellectually engaging period (after the Glorious Revolution and before the arrival of 'Capability' Brown) – this would be it.

TESORI D'ARTE ITALIANA
LUIGI DAMI
THE ITALIAN GARDEN
CASA EDITRICE D'ARTE
BESTETTI & TUMMINELLI · MILANO

THE ITALIAN GARDEN
by Luigi Dami
(Casa Editrice d'Arte, 1925)

A treasure trove of drawings, engravings and black-and-white photographs of the great Italian gardens of the Renaissance. I spent the summer of 1980 travelling through Italy looking at gardens, many of them neglected or abandoned. I spent an afternoon up an olive tree in Frascati after being chased by a large Alsatian when I had been trying to find the Nymphaeum by Vignola at Villa Mondragone – now restored to a state of bland sterility. This book brings those exciting days back and shows us how these gardens might once have been seen before being overgrown or in some cases, over-restored.


Piet Oudolf &
Henk Gerritsen
DREAM PLANTS
FOR THE NATURAL GARDEN
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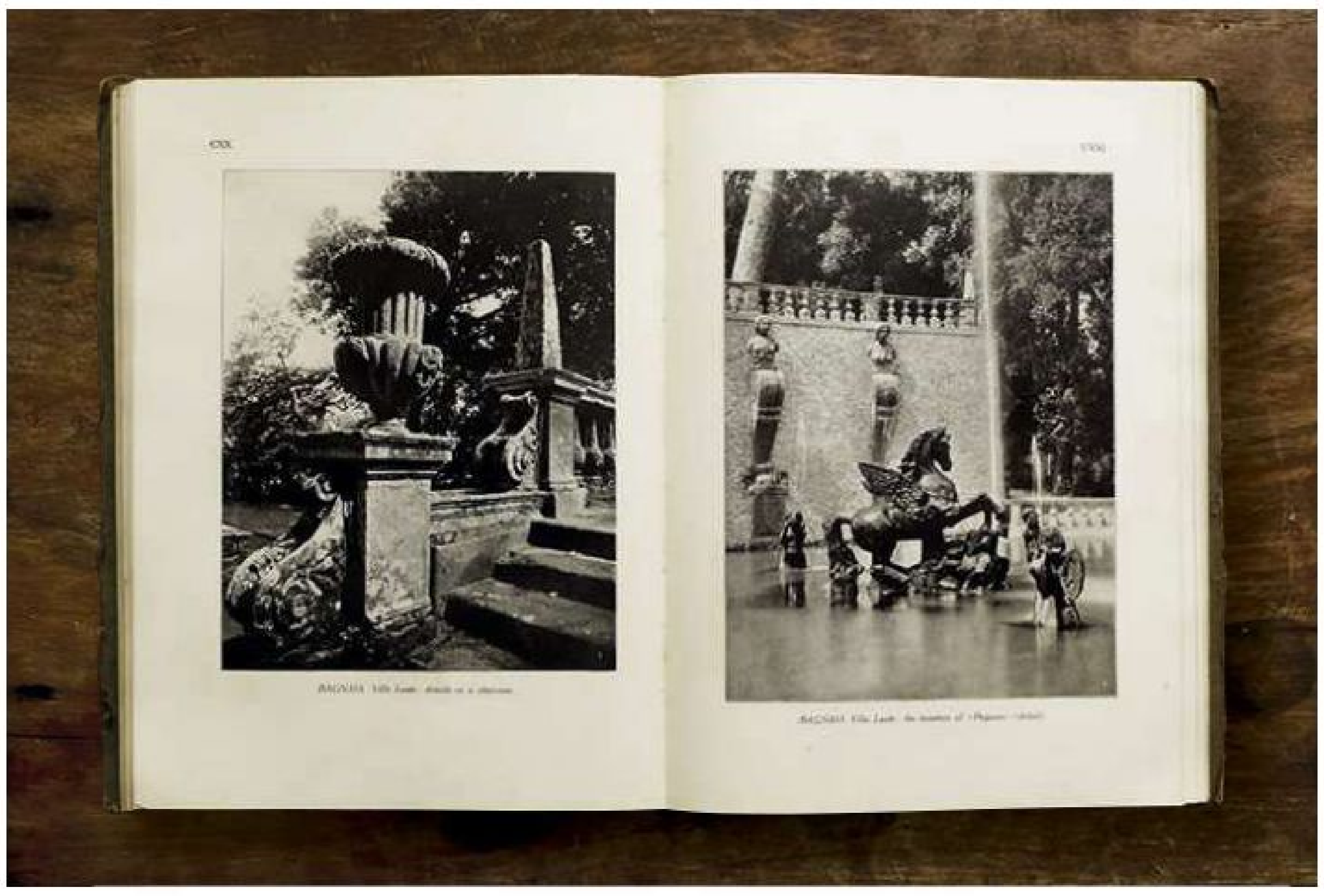
DREAM PLANTS FOR THE NATURAL GARDEN
by Piet Oudolf and Henk Gerritsen
(Frances Lincoln, 2013)

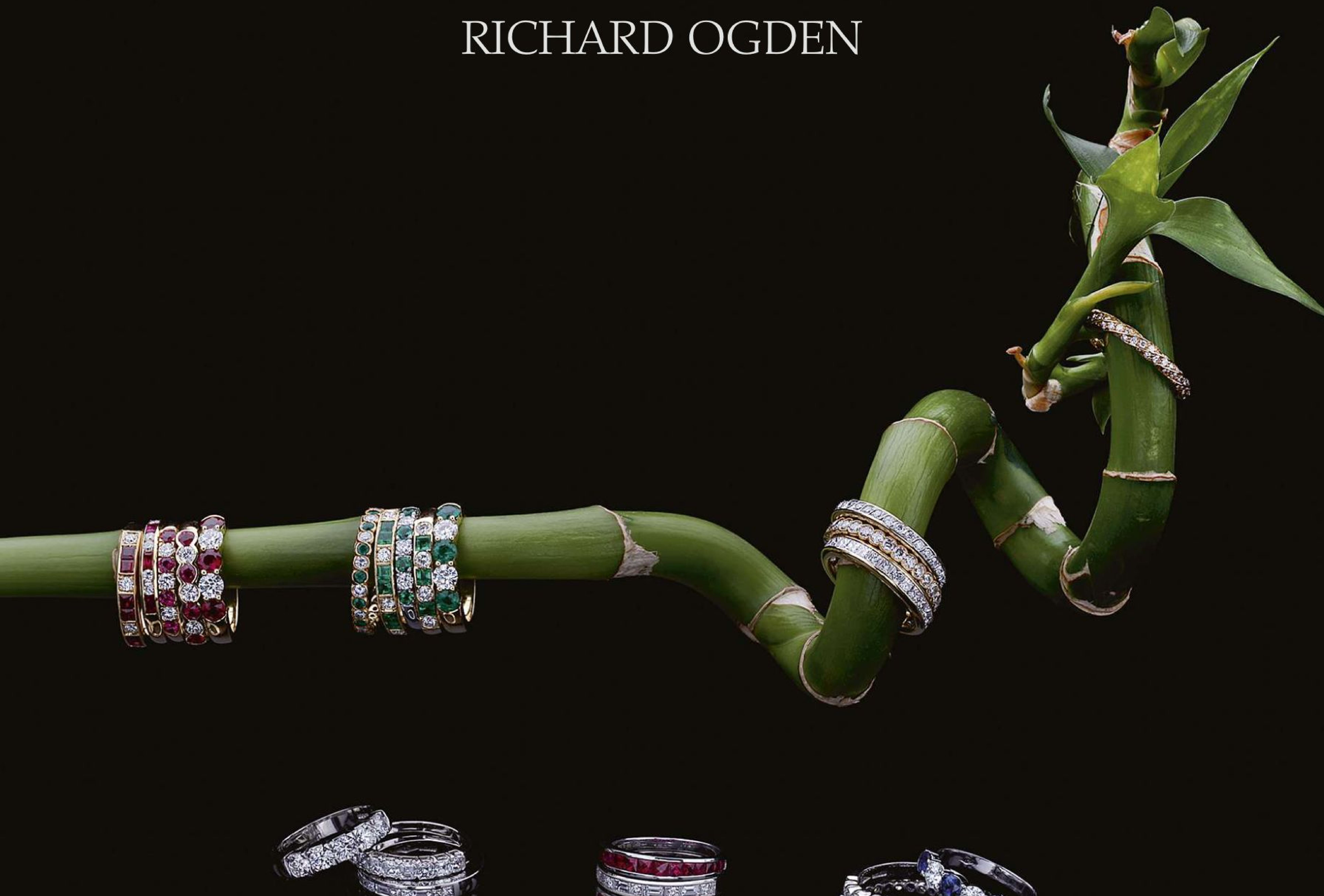
This was the book that introduced me to the wonderful range of plants that Piet was growing in his own garden in Hummelo and elsewhere in gardens he designed. For five years, this and the Hummelo nursery catalogue were primary references for me. The text is minimal, the pictures seductive and yes, very dreamy. Piet remains an enduring inspiration. I took my team on a trip to visit Piet this summer and we spent an hour with him in his studio, studying his wonderful planting plans on the table, and looking out through the full-height glass wall into the garden around us. Truly memorable.

If I were to recommend any book about this period in landscape, this would be *The Arcadian Friends*

The Arcadian Friends.


The Italian Garden.

RICHARD OGDEN



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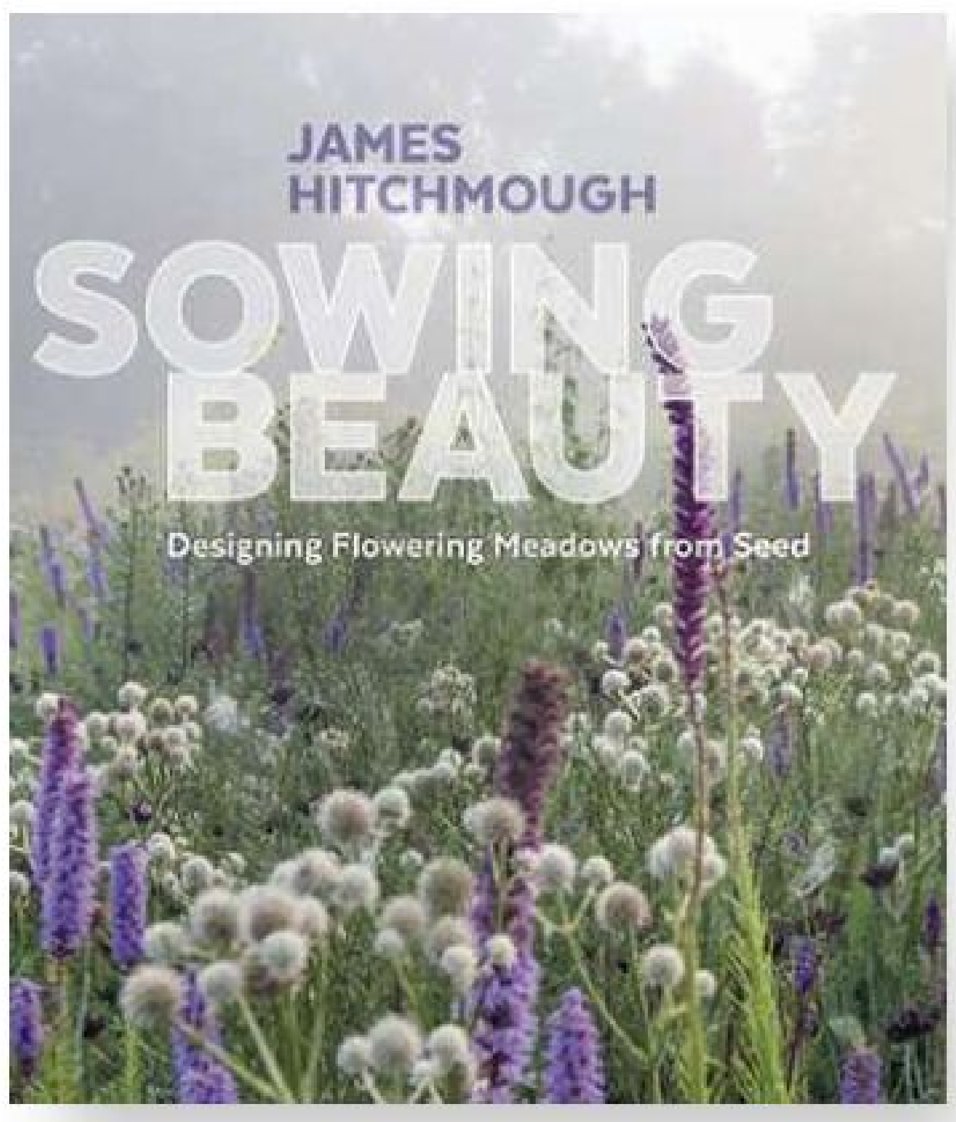
W.J. BEAN
TREES & SHRUBS
HARDY IN THE BRITISH ISLES

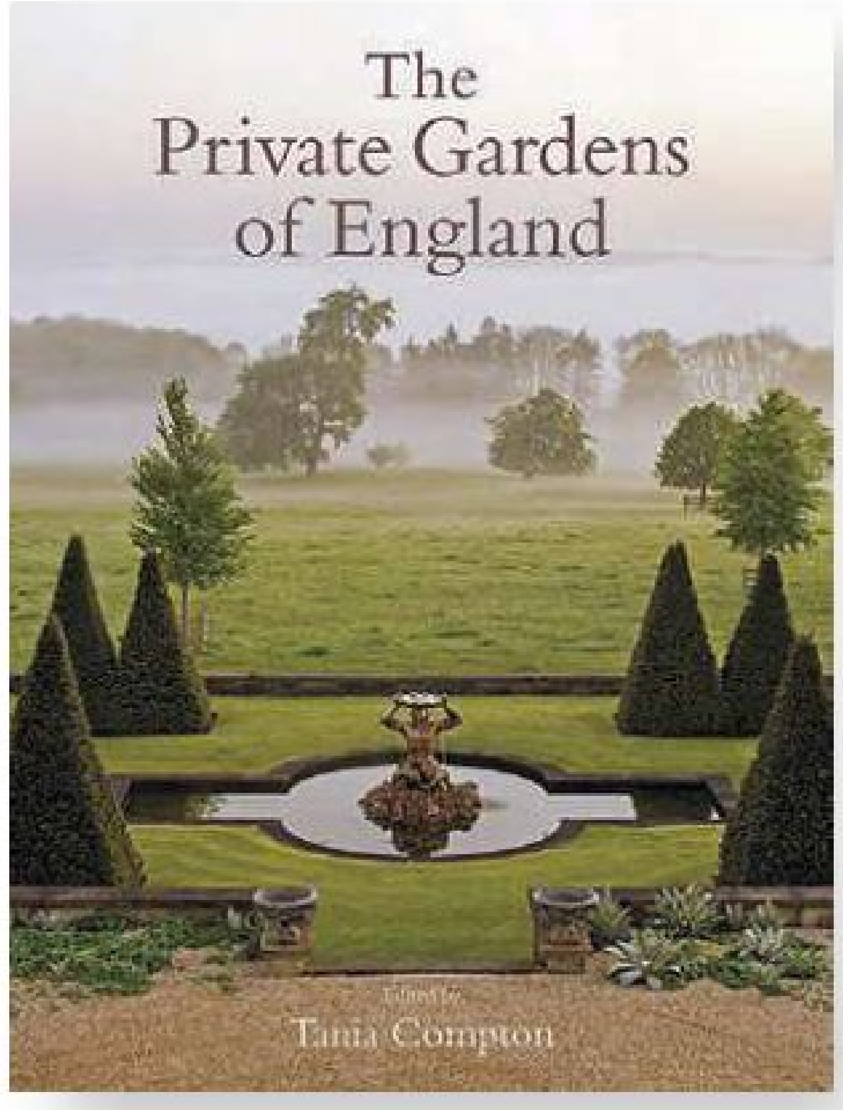
TREES & SHRUBS
by William Jackson Bean
(John Murray, 8th edition published in four volumes during the 1970s)

When I was in my early twenties I used to keep a volume or two of Bean by my bed, quickly skimming through *Berberis* and *Contenaster*, but salivating over *Magnolia*, *Quercus* and *Stewartia*. I loved reading about trees I had never seen, such as *Carpinus orientalis*, which, says Bean, 'I have been told by an officer who took part in the Crimean War, much impeded the advance of our men, made under the cover of darkness'. I still turn regularly to those four thick, dumpy volumes as a gold standard of information. In my slightly chaotic book collection, they are about the easiest to find, along with the even larger *New RHS Dictionary of Gardening*.



SOWING BEAUTY
by James Hitchmough
(Timber Press, 2017)

I went on a plant-hunting trip to western Sichuan with James this spring, along with Cassian Schmidt and Piet Oudolf among others. It was one of those enthralling times when you realise that you are bumping along the foothills of plant knowledge. But James seemed to know just about everything. I love his company, and his apparent belief that all life is an experiment so best not to hang around. We have worked together on some great projects – the results are always a bit unpredictable, but normally exceed my most psychedelic dreams. I love the mix of scientific rigour and visual extravagance. This book is a great repository of knowledge. Gratifyingly geeky, with lots of charts.



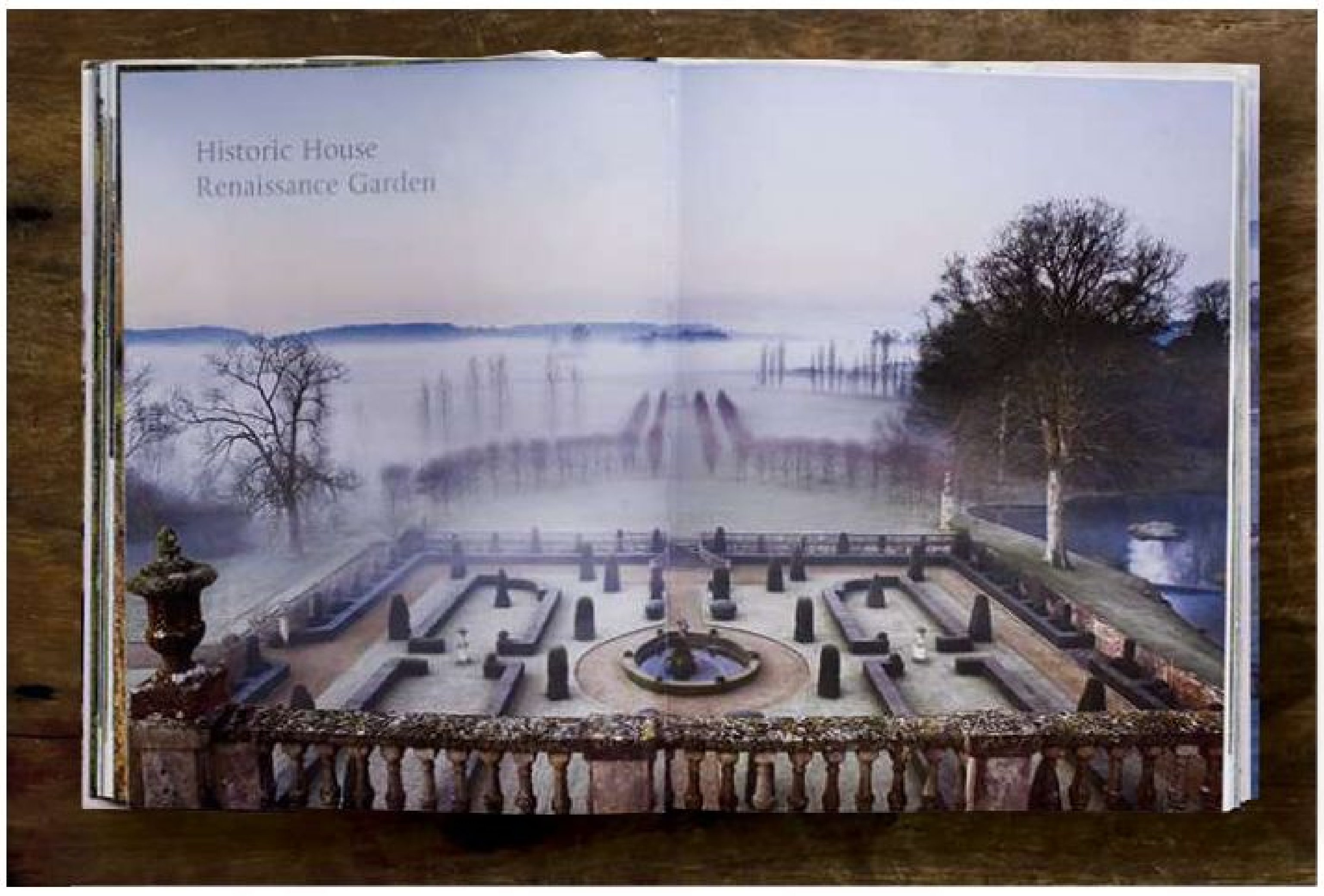
THE PRIVATE GARDENS OF ENGLAND
Edited by Tania Compton
(Constable, 2015)

There has to be room for one doorstop of a book and this has to be it. An amazing achievement to get all these sensitive, garden-proud owners to contribute to this beautiful book for nothing and then donate the profits to the Garden Museum. The writing in the book is by the various garden owners themselves and this makes it immensely varied and interesting. A glossy to end all glossies.

• Tom Stuart-Smith will be joining our tour of Moroccan gardens for readers of *Gardens Illustrated* to showcase his creation, Le Jardin Secret, in Marrakesh. 28 March – 2 April 2020. **gardensillustrated.com**

> I love *Sowing Beauty*'s mix of scientific rigour and visual extravagance. Gratifyingly geeky, with lots of charts

Sowing Beauty.



The Private Gardens of England.

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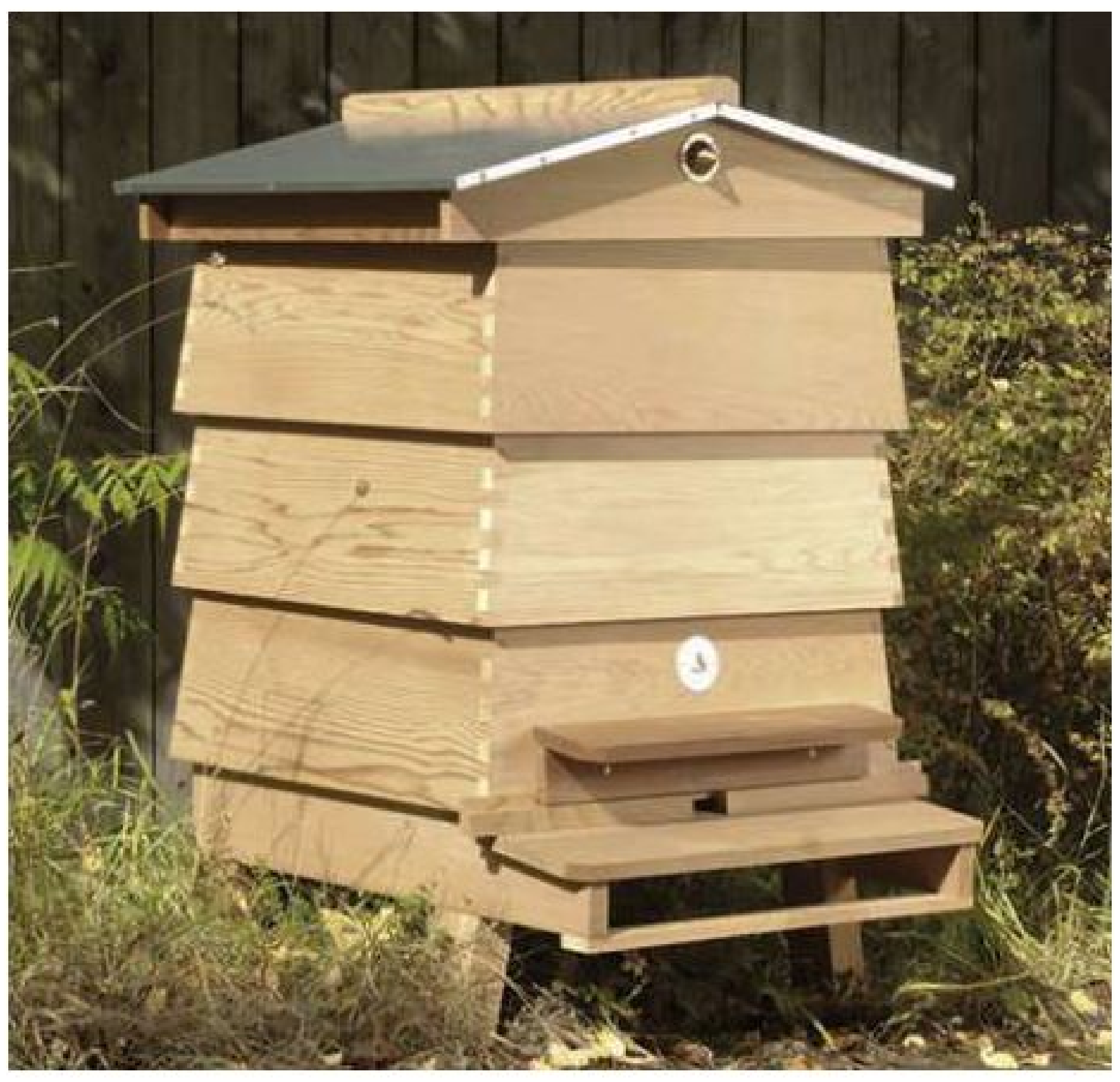
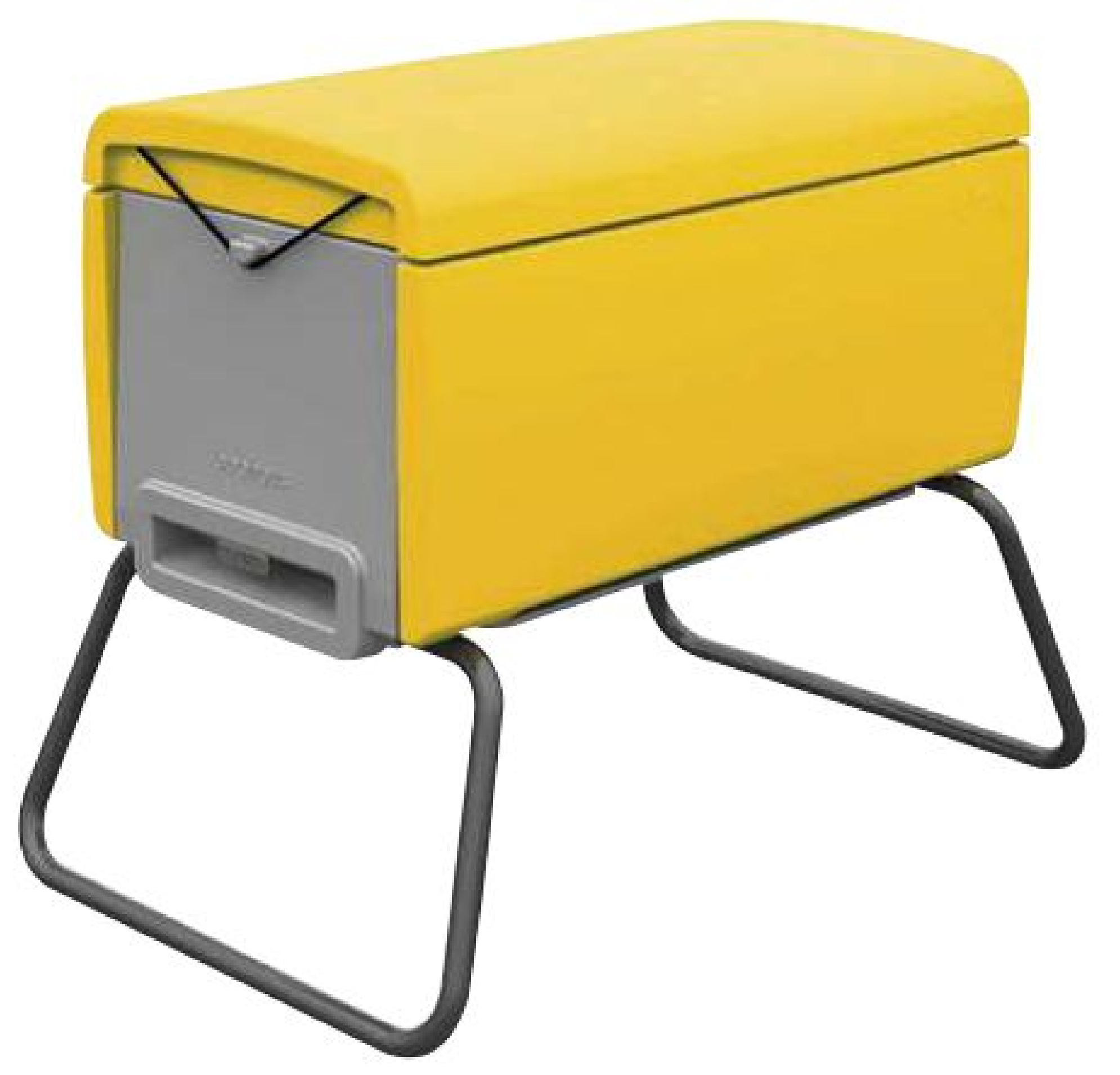
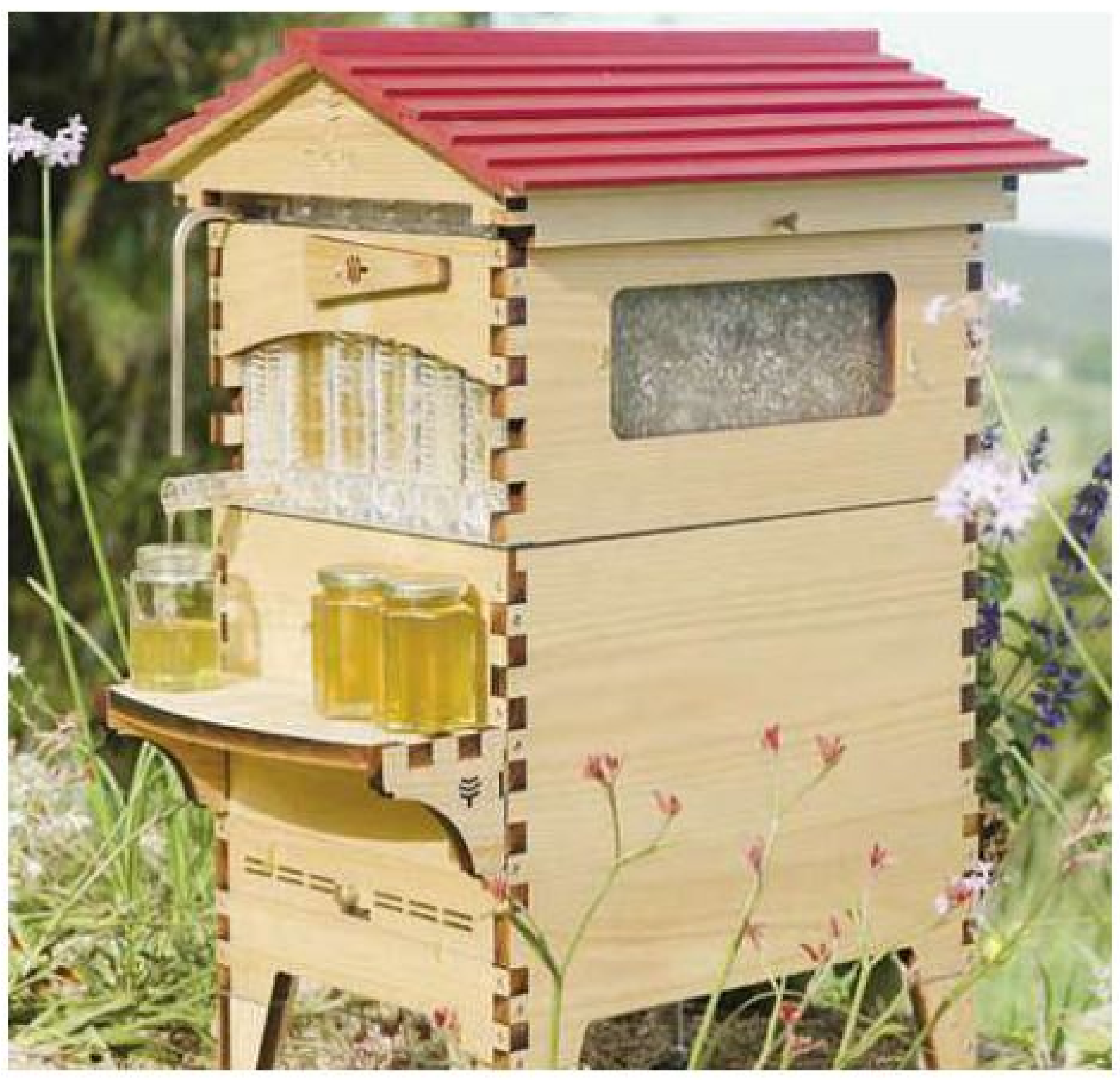


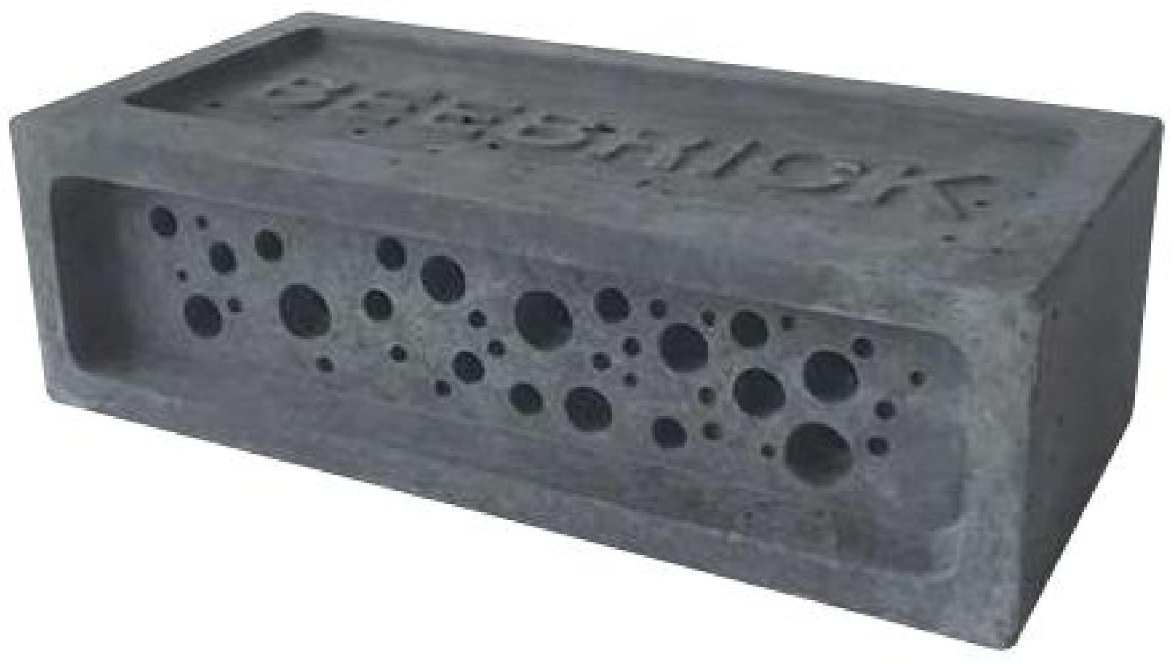
READY ASSEMBLED
WBC Hive Empty Kit (assembled),
£290, National Bee Supplies,
0844 326 2010, beekeeping.co.uk



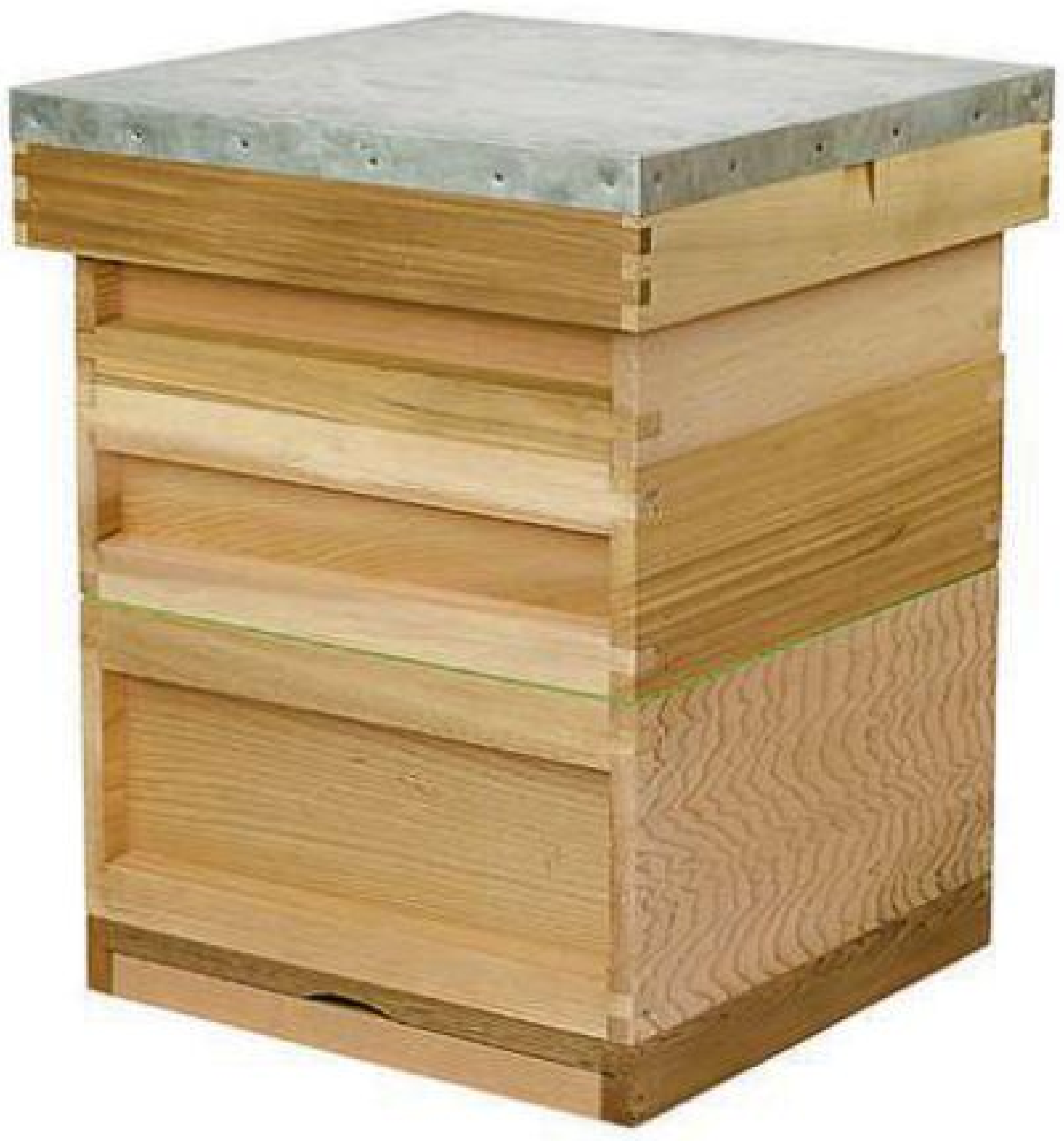
STYLISH PAD
Beehaus Beehive,
From £449.10, Omlet,
01295 500900, omlet.co.uk



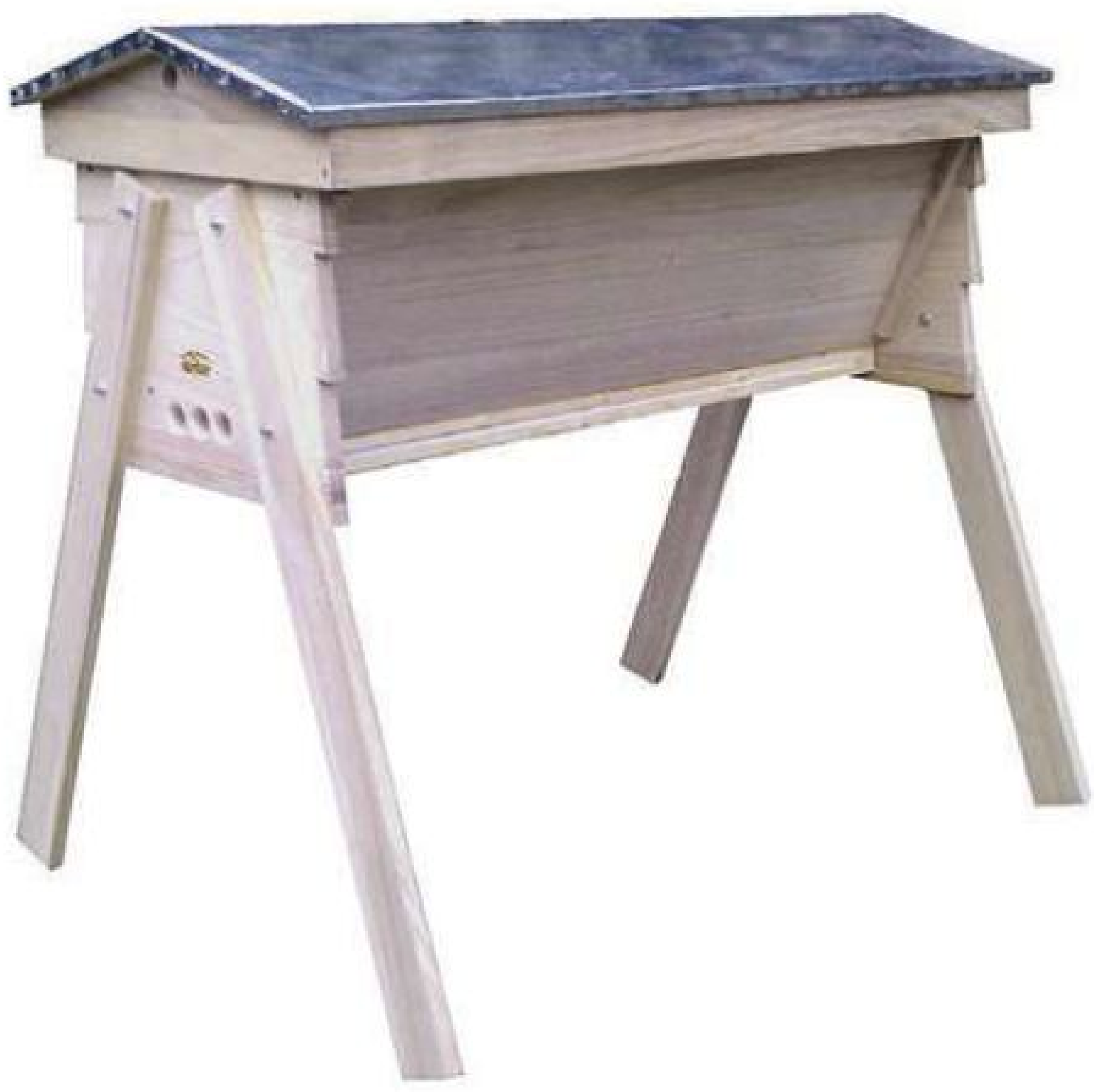
SWEET SENSATION
Flow Hive 2 – Araucaria,
€678, Flow Hive EU,
+31 (0)8 5208 4111, eu.honeyflow.com



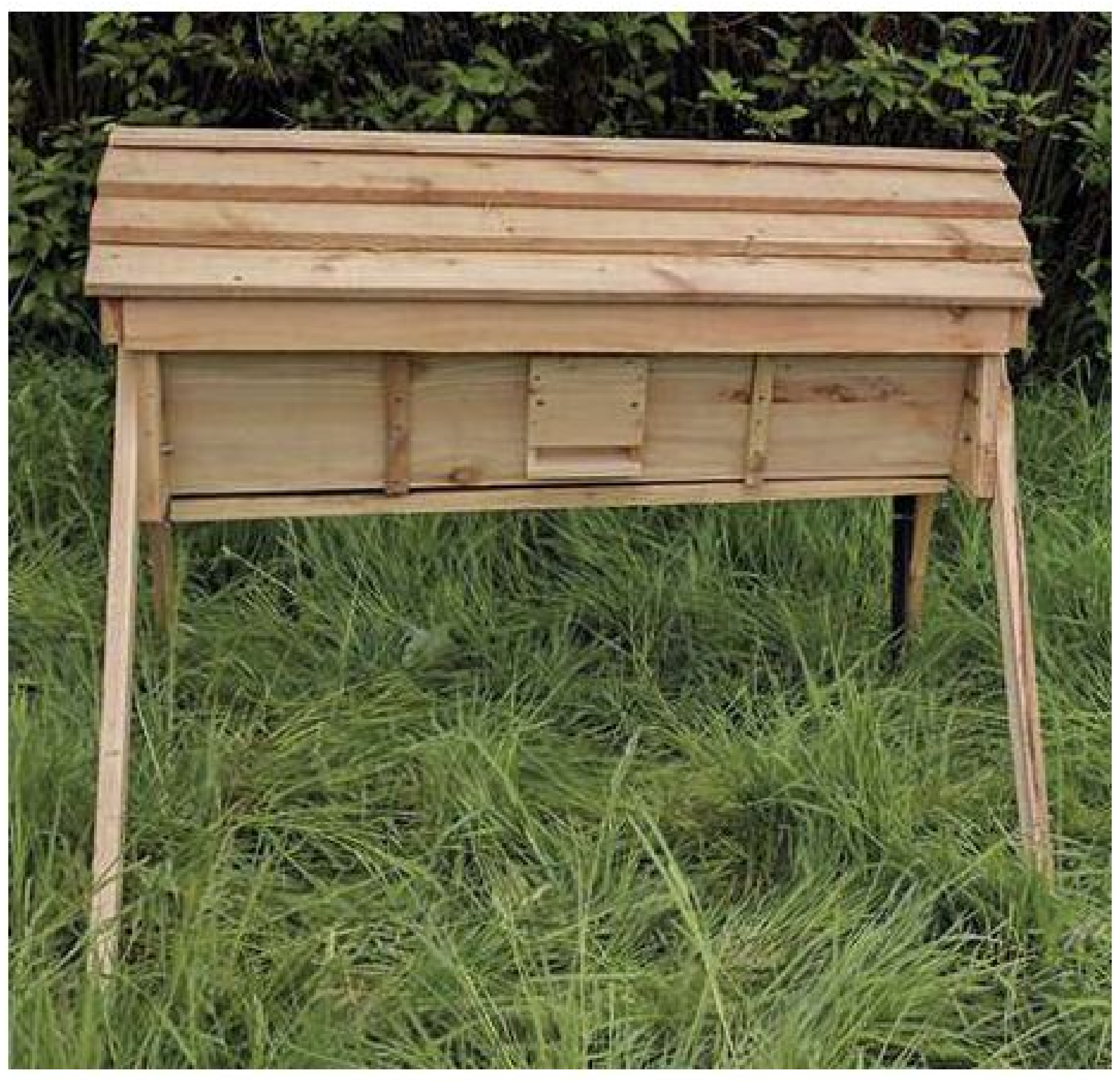
SIMPLE STYLE
Bee Brick, charcoal
£27.50, Green & Blue,
01872 858658, greenandblue.co.uk



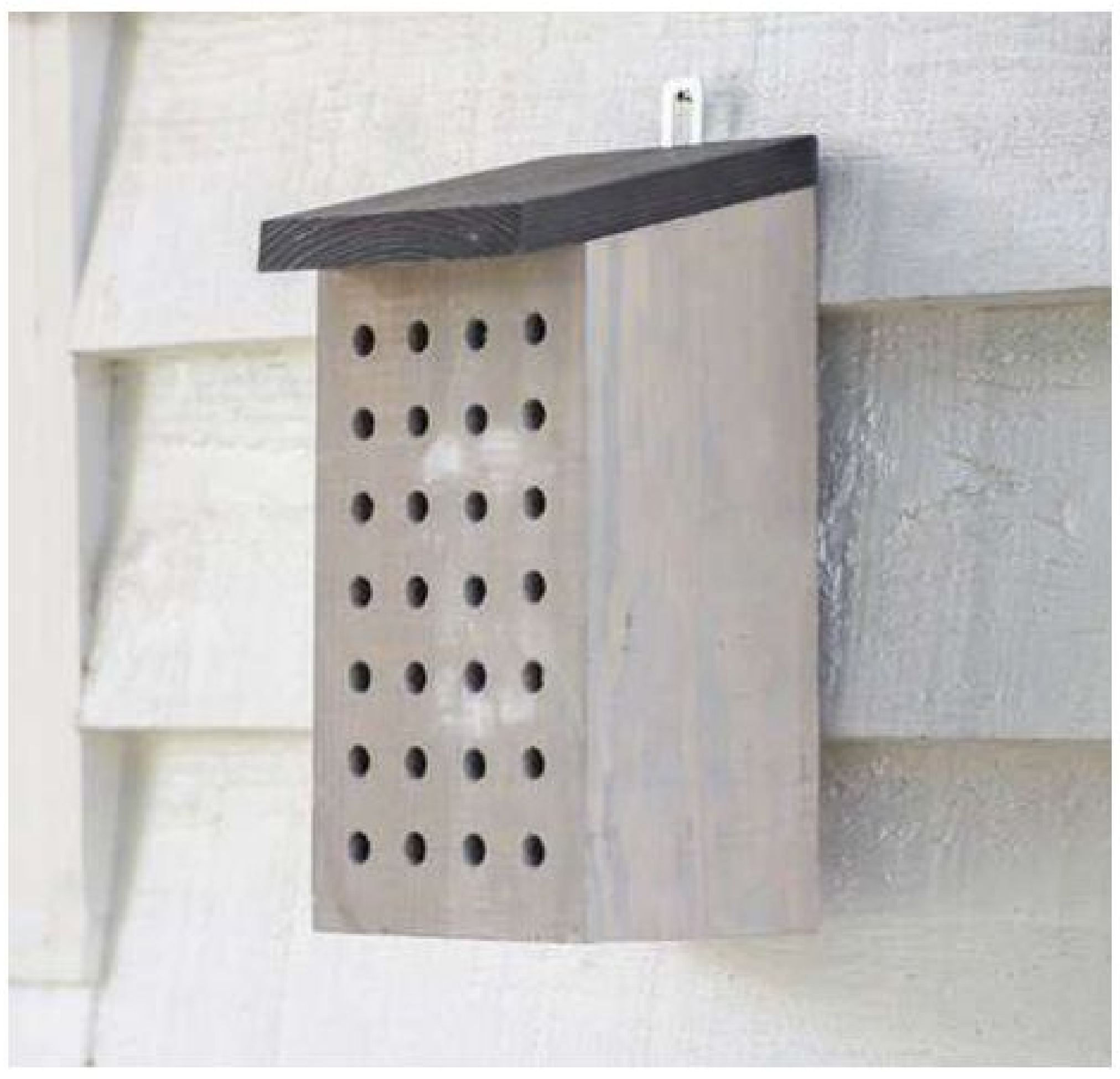
CLEAN LINES
English Cedar National Hive,
From £125.95, BBWear,
01872 562731, bbwear.co.uk



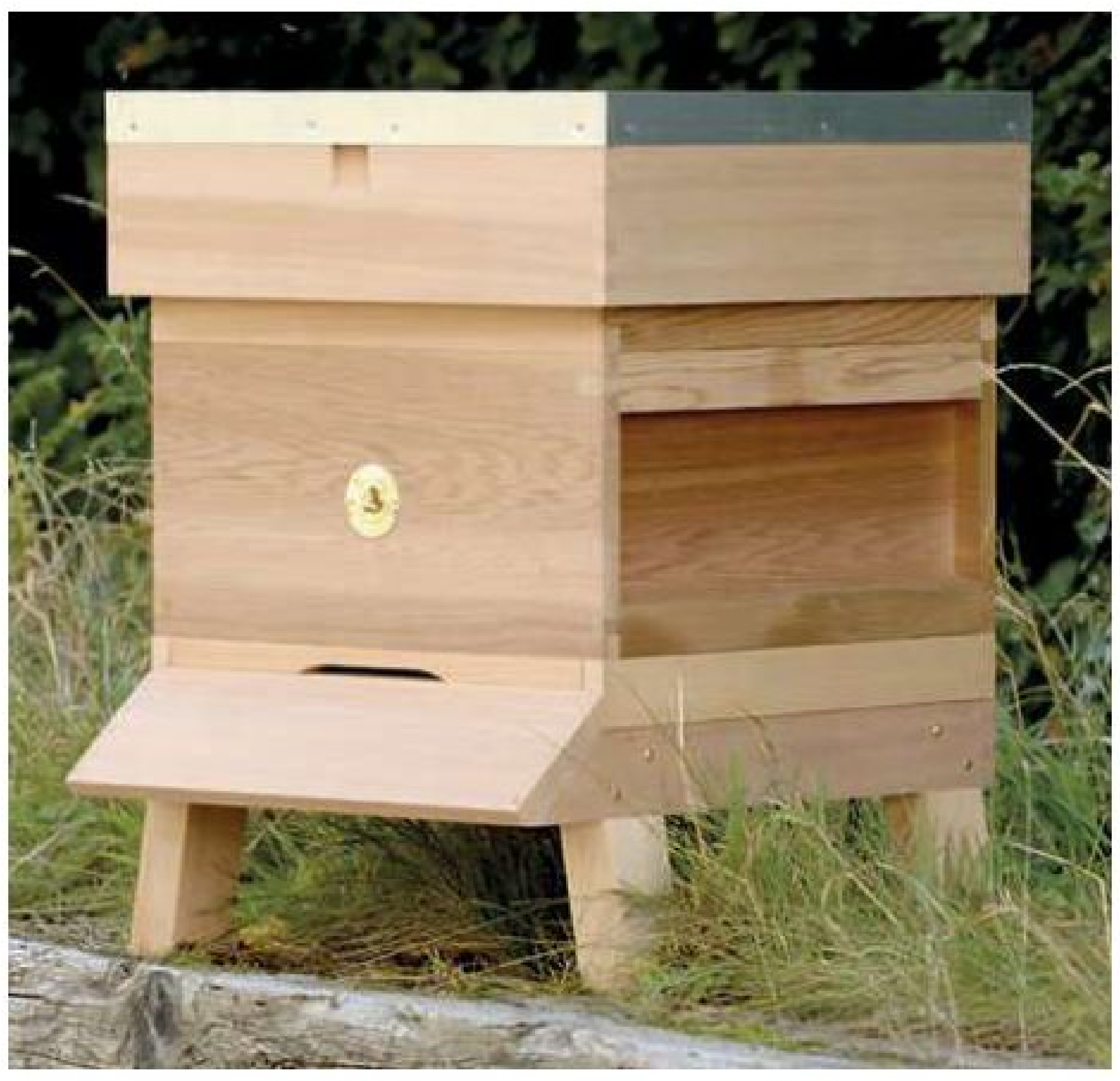
HIGH-RISE LIVING
Cornish Top Bar Bee Hive,
£248.50, Heather Bell Honey Bees,
cornishhoney.co.uk



HONEY BAR
Top Bar Hive,
£245, made to order, Jim The Bee,
jimthebee.co.uk



HOME FROM HOME
Shetland Bee House,
£25, Garden Trading,
01993 845559, gardentrading.co.uk



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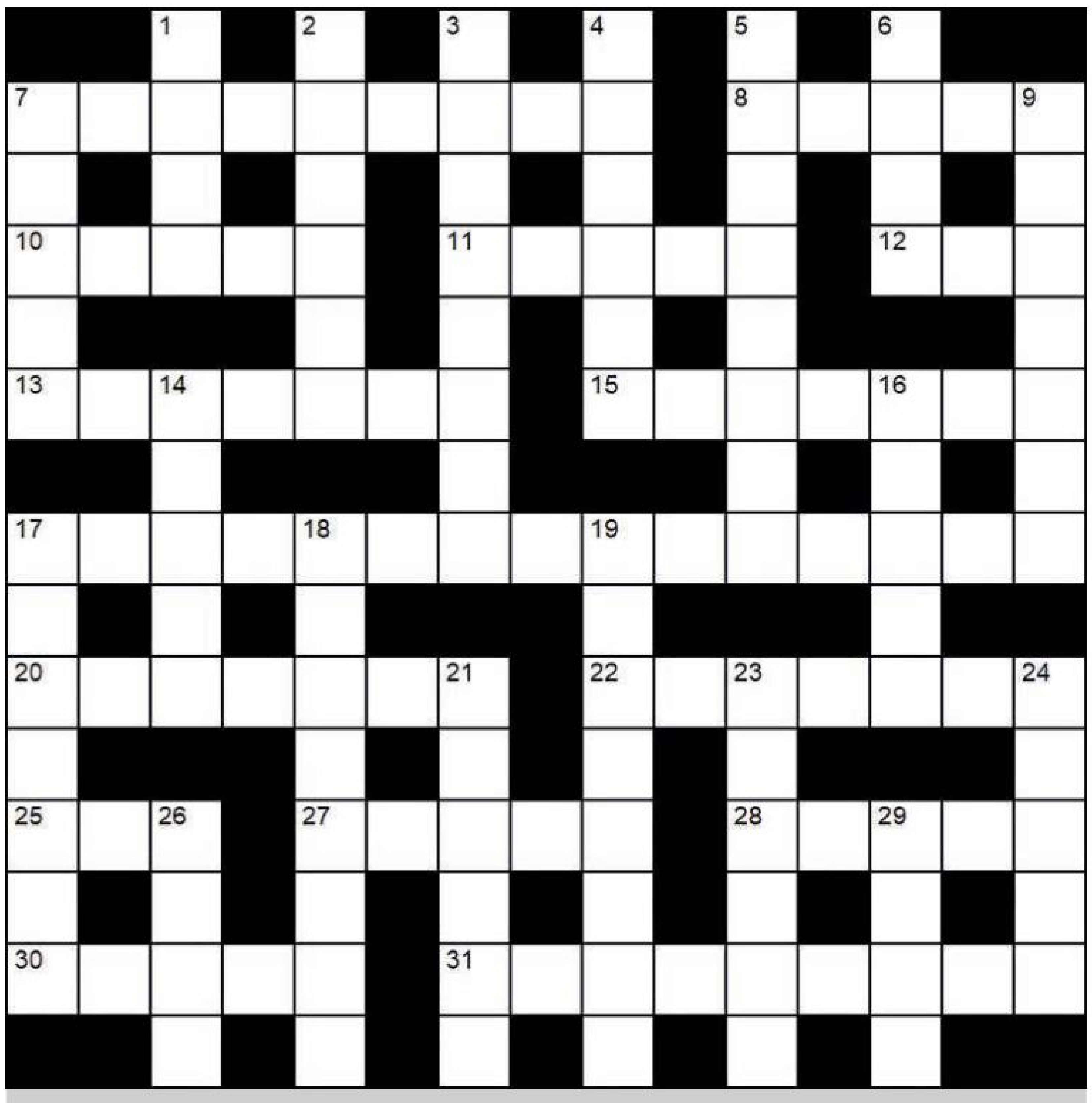
Crossword



ACROSS

7 *Dianthus*, eg 'Spinfield Betty's Pink' (9)
8 A yellow-leaved *Cotinus* hidden in cerulean *Cotinus* (5)
10 Juicy stone fruit of *Prunus persica* (5)
11 Plant family including dahlias and rudbeckias (5)
12 A pollinator to exist needs energy, initially (3)
13 A *Skimmia japonica* with red buds: 'Red Rash'? (7)
15 Japanese paper art, and *Aquilegia* series of bi-coloured flowers (7)
17 *Symphyotrichum* has mostly replaced *Aster* as genus of this plant (10,5)
20 A fast-growing cypress makes Dan yell out (7)
22 Eg pendulous flowers of love-lies-bleeding (7)
25 Olive's extract? (3)
27 Partly organised an umbelliferous herb with liquorice-flavoured seeds (5)
28/29 A double-flowering orange-pink *Dianthus* – famously located off Queensland's coast? (5,4)
30 18th-century German botanical illustrator – moving here on time (5)
31 Summer-flowering bulb aka triplet lily – unusual lei attire (9)

DOWN

1 Operatic song, for *Sorbus* ___, the common whitebeam (4)
2 Gardener, ___ De Thame and name of peach-pink hybrid tea rose with frilly petals (6)
3 An unexpected bonus, down-to-earth fruit crop! (8)
4 Partly thin/dig out plant producing violet-blue dye (6)
5 Large red poppy with black splodges – it feeds on aphids! (8)
6 Fungal disease in potatoes (4)
7 Thorny shrub with edible flower-bud: 'High Jinks'? (5)
9 Common name for x *Fatshedera lizei* – tie very loosely (4,3)
14 Sharp *Vanity Fair* character names a Shasta daisy cultivar (5)
16 A *Geranium cinereum* cultivar – sort of *Felicia*, if removed (5)
17 Scottish Borders town's name for a deep-pink floribunda (7)
18 Plant family including love-lies-bleeding – turns maranta briefly hot (8)
19 National hymn exists for herb, commonly called chamomile (8)
21 Eg swathes of snowdrops (6)
23 Underground shoot of eg a grafted rose (6)
24 A series of *Salvia* plants – 'Spicy Sauce' (5)
26 Sweet, extra-tender, mid-season sweetcorn – bit of fun! (4)
29 See 28 across.

Solutions to this month's crossword will be printed next month

SOLUTIONS TO DECEMBER'S CROSSWORD

ACROSS 8/11 Snowball bush **9** Plumose **12** Scents **13** Moles **14** Martagon **15** Spur **17** Lutea **18** Amaryllis **21** Divides **23** Tie up **24** Masson **26** Picea **28** Smell **29** Roma **30** Osprey **32** Copse **34** Pink gin **35** Snow-white **37** Torch **39** Lobe **41** Marigold **44/25** Green bean **45** Sawfly **47** Frog **48** Lychnis **49** Photinia. **DOWN 1** Ink-cap **2** Gwen **3** Tassel **4** Clematis **5** Purslane **6** Corm **7** Oslo **9** Polyantha **10** Early **11** Beatles **16** Raven **19** Apple **20** Snowman **21** Dresses **22** Dopey **24** Melon **27** Cacti **28** Sweet peas **29** Regal **31** Rooting **33** Peer Gynt **34** Parsnips **36** Whorl **38** Hyssop **40** Bellis **42** Afro **43** Dock **46** Whip.

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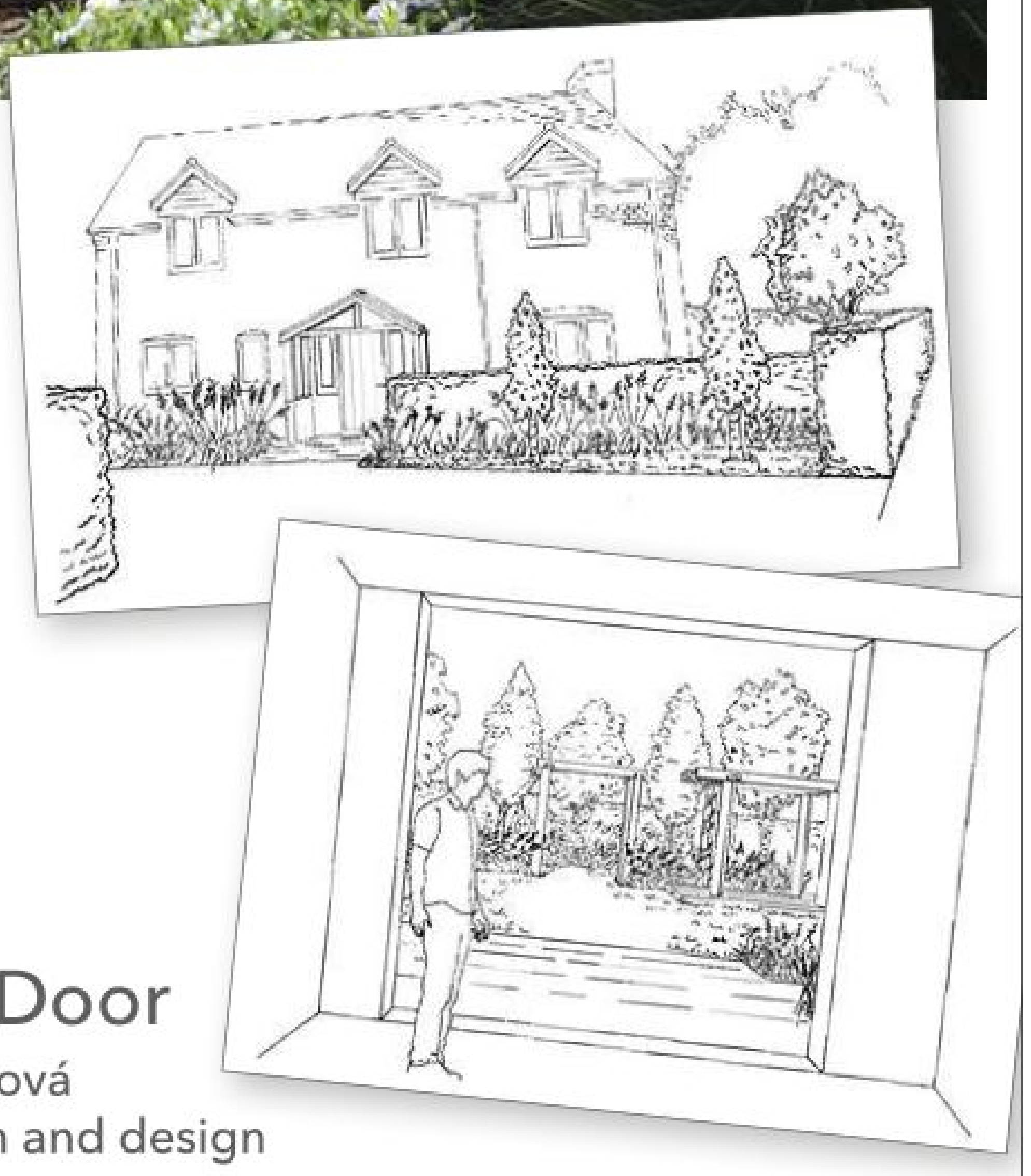

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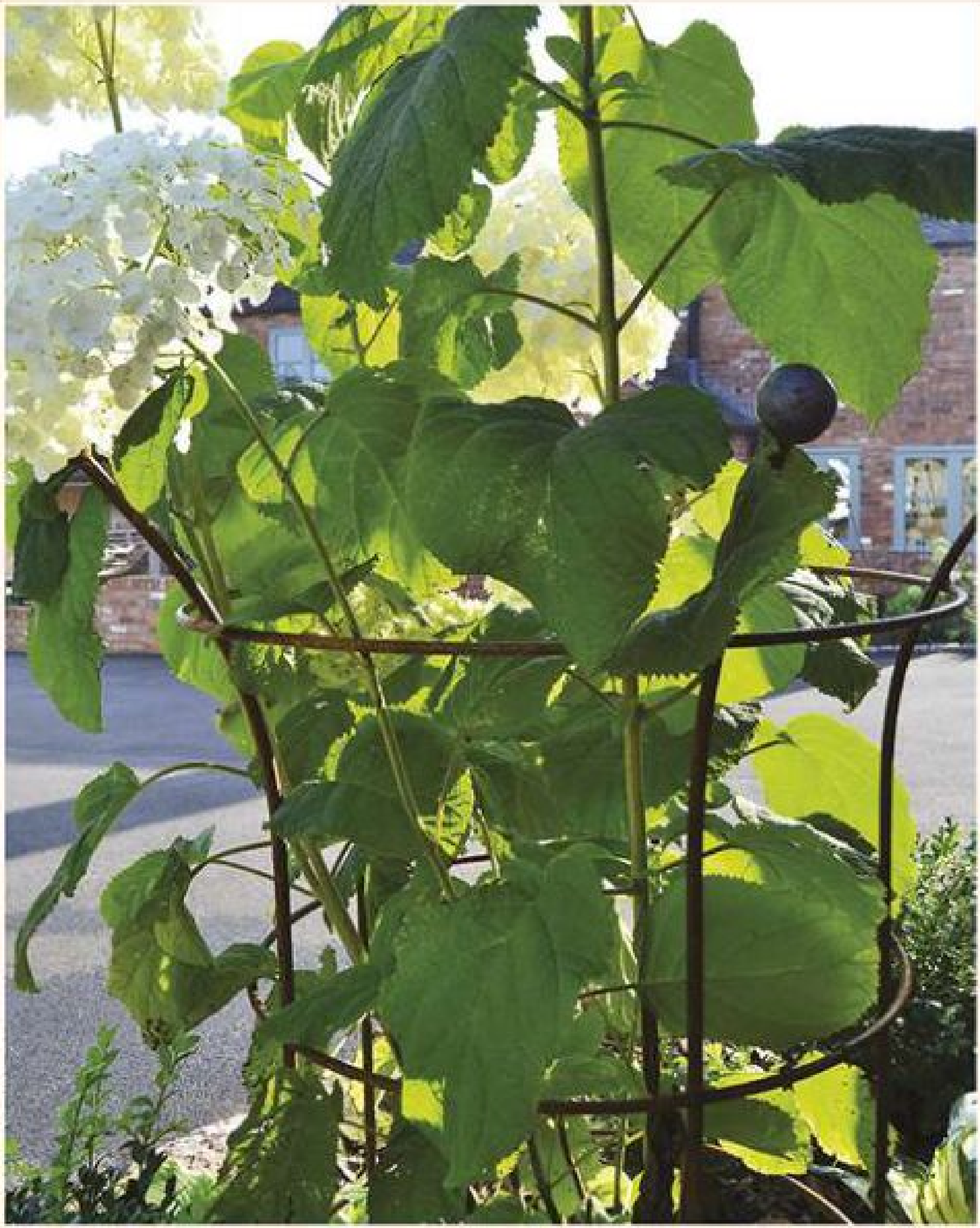

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What are hardiness ratings?

Hardiness ratings will help you get the best from your plants and your garden, but what exactly do they mean?

Throughout *Gardens Illustrated* there are references to a plant's hardiness described using two separate scales: one from the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) and the other from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Both are based on accumulated experience of a plant's ability to endure cold conditions, or in the UK, the ability to withstand changeable periods of freezing and relatively mild, wet weather. Plants adapt to tolerate cold to varying degrees. Some will take a light frost (temperatures just below freezing) for a couple of hours, others cope with long periods of freezing to remarkably low temperatures.

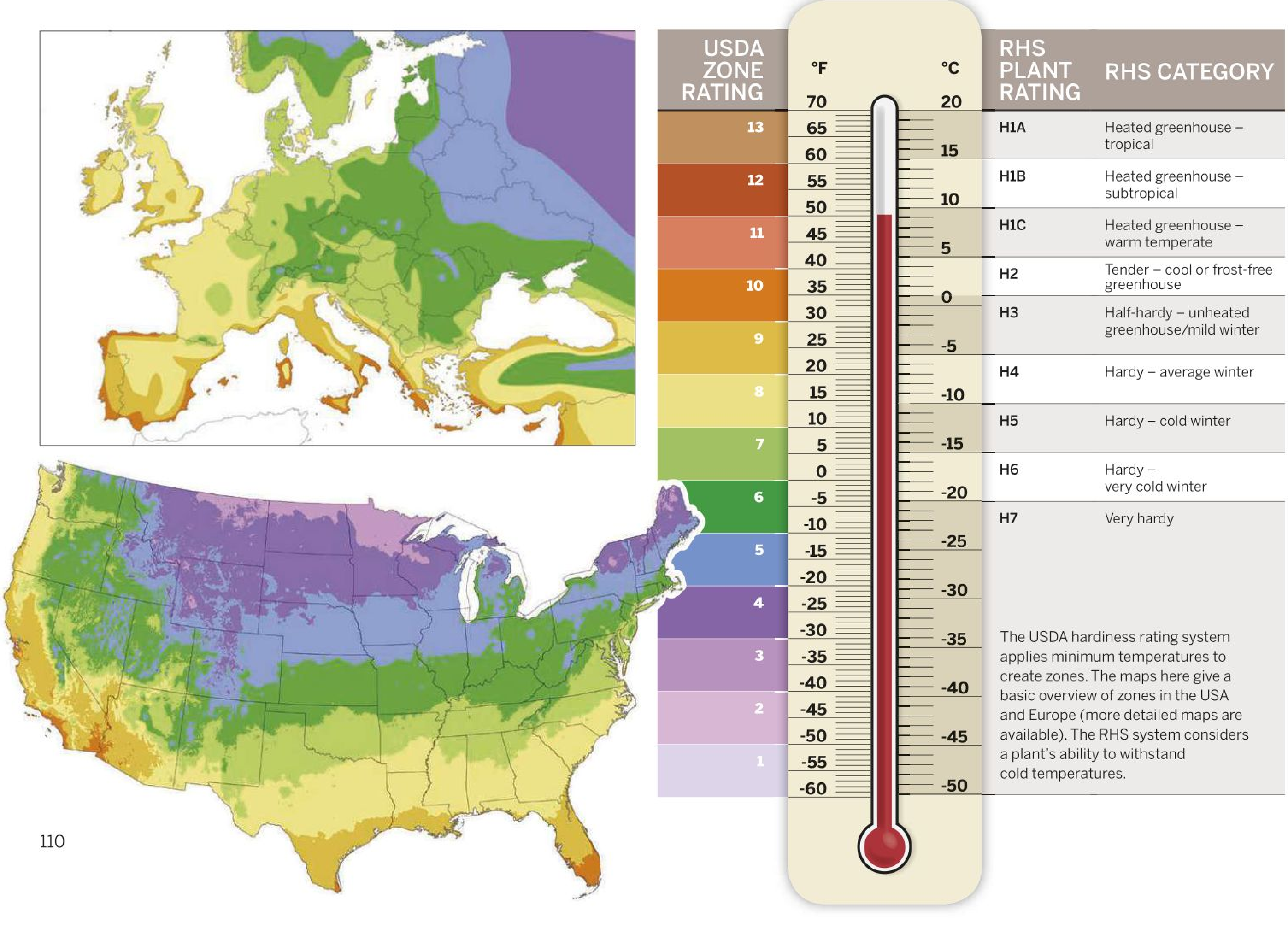
The USDA scale was developed in the 1960s for North America but it is now widely used in other countries around the world. It's based on minimum average temperatures in a range of zones – as shown in the two illustration below – which increase in steps of 10°F. The US zones have been mapped in remarkable detail and plants can be assigned a rating according to the coldest zone in which they can grow or, as we have done here, a range of zones in which the plant is known to grow. These range from 1 (very hardy) to 13 (least hardy), with each divided into two 5°F subzones 'a' and 'b'. This USDA system has been applied to the UK and Europe and gardeners here can use the mapped zones as a general guide.

The RHS scale, introduced in 2012, is a more descriptive system of hardiness ratings. Like the USDA system, it uses a scale (this time in 5°C steps) from H1 to H7, based on minimum winter temperatures. However, it has two major differences. The first is that it runs in the opposite direction to the USDA system – 1 is very tender, 7 is very hardy. It also offers a description for the garden conditions to help reflect the variable nature of UK winters. These are summarised in the scale below, but you can find more detailed descriptions on the RHS website. The most tender rating, H1, has been subdivided into three categories A, B and C.

Perhaps, though, the more important difference is that the RHS scale is a rating of the plant's hardiness and hasn't been translated into mapped zones for the UK.

All rating given in the magazine are accurate to the best of our knowledge. Not every plant has been given a rating by the RHS, but where none is available our contributors will sometimes rate the plant based on their own trials. USDA scales are taken from the website of the Missouri Botanical Garden (missouribotanicalgarden.org) or based on growers' experiences in the USA. Both are included as a guide only to help you predict what you should be able to grow in your garden. □

This guide is based on a longer feature that appeared in issue 229 of *Gardens Illustrated* by Dr John David, head of horticultural taxonomy, and Leigh Hunt, principal horticultural advisor, at RHS Wisley. Find out more about the scales at:
RHS hardiness ratings rhs.org.uk/plants/trials-awards/award-of-garden-merit/rhs-hardiness-rating
USDA hardiness maps planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/PHZMWeb



RHS PLANT RATING	RHS CATEGORY
H1A	Heated greenhouse – tropical
H1B	Heated greenhouse – subtropical
H1C	Heated greenhouse – warm temperate
H2	Tender – cool or frost-free greenhouse
H3	Half-hardy – unheated greenhouse/mild winter
H4	Hardy – average winter
H5	Hardy – cold winter
H6	Hardy – very cold winter
H7	Very hardy

The USDA hardiness rating system applies minimum temperatures to create zones. The maps here give a basic overview of zones in the USA and Europe (more detailed maps are available). The RHS system considers a plant's ability to withstand cold temperatures.

ILLUSTRATION CHRIS JONES

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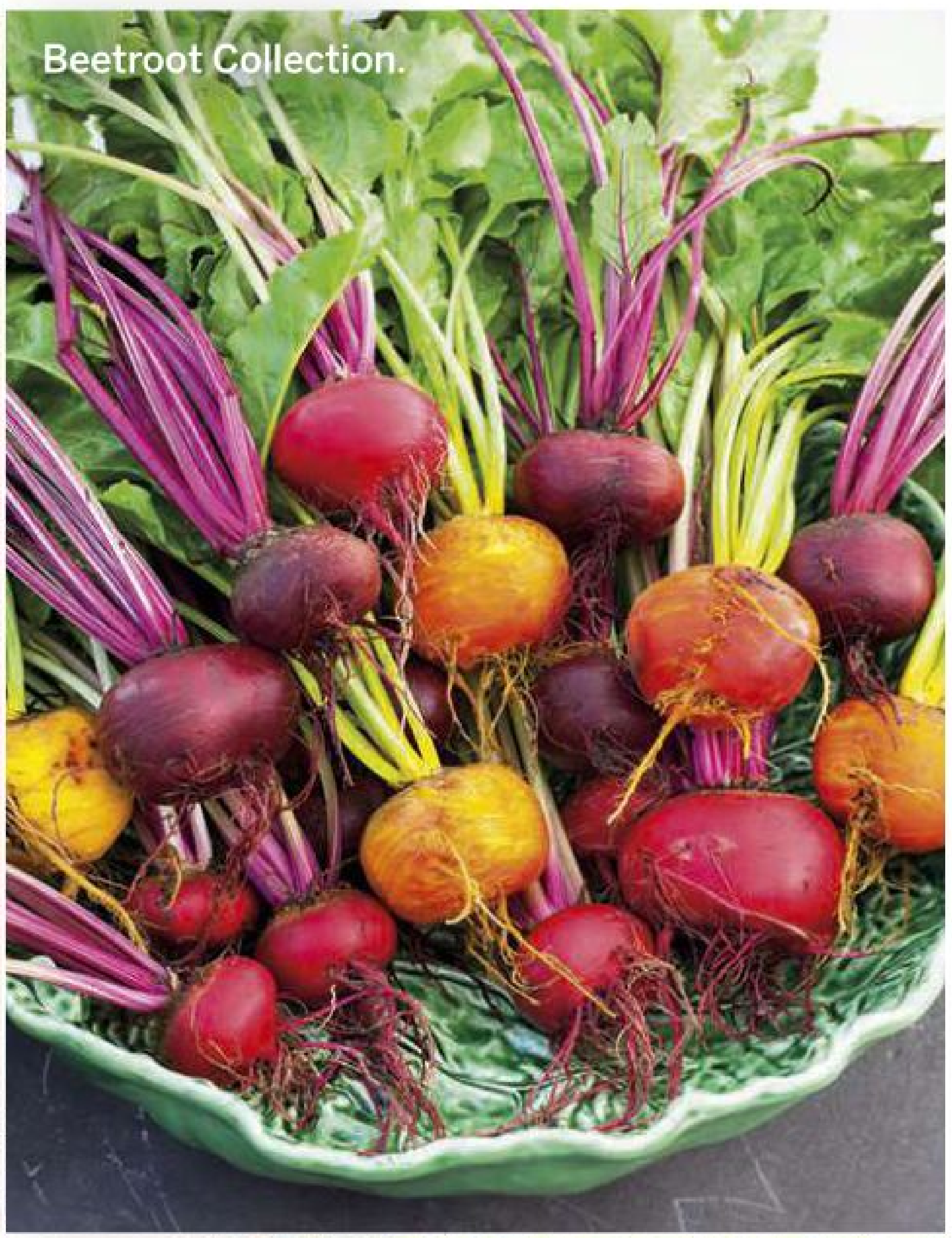

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Gardens to visit 2020

This new year, make a resolution to visit our collection of stunning gardens and arboretums from across the UK and Ireland. Watch the turn of the seasons through their beautifully changing flora and fauna.

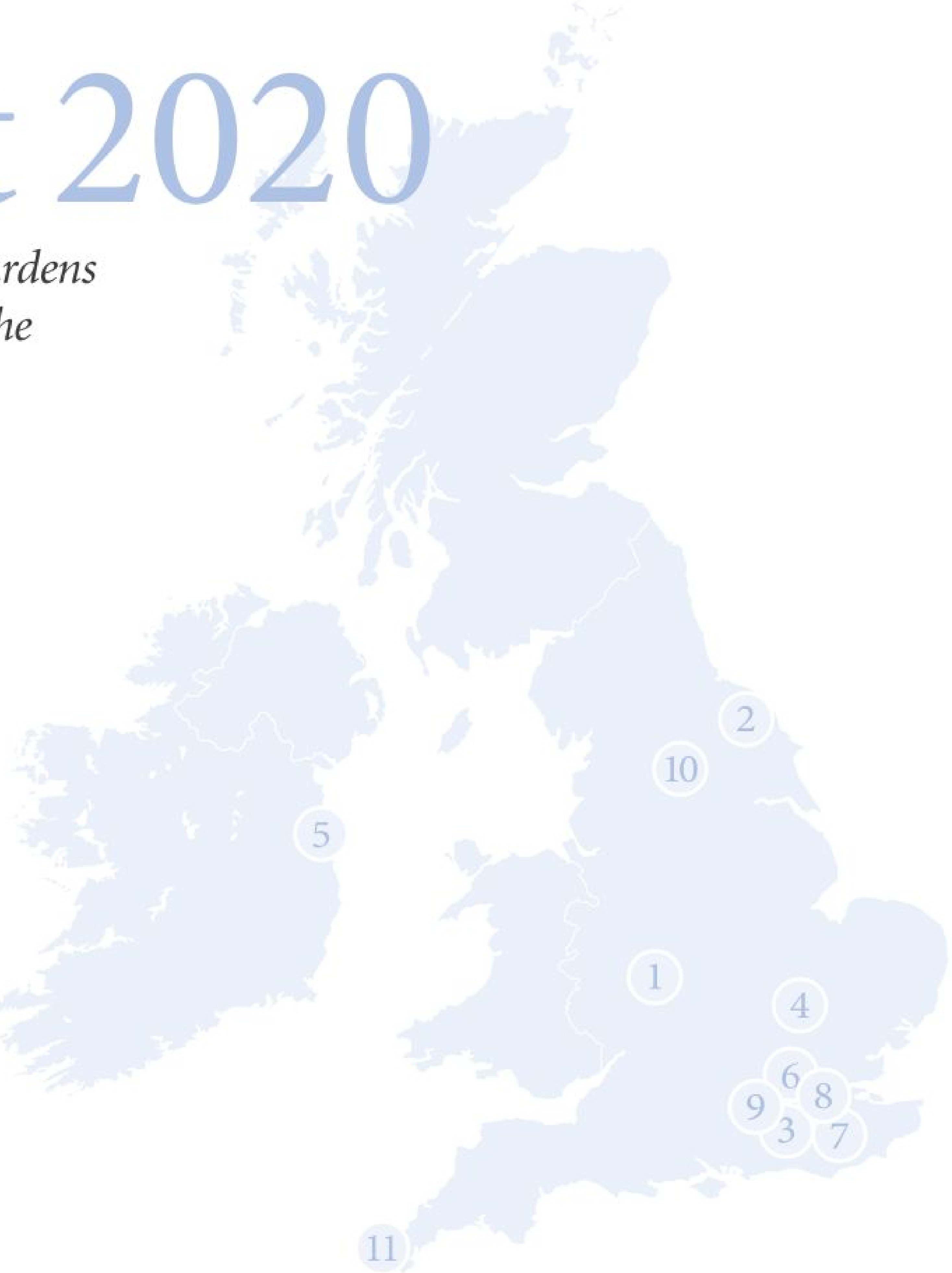

Image: Clive Nichols

1 MORTON HALL GARDENS

Seven stunning gardens encircling a late Georgian manor house with breath-taking views over unspoilt Worcestershire countryside. Magical spring meadows, serene Japanese and rock woodland gardens and brimming summer borders in exquisite colour schemes.

Worcestershire B96 6SJ | 01386 791820 | mortonhallgardens.co.uk

2 SCAMPSTON WALLED GARDEN

Revel in the tranquillity of the award-winning contemporary Walled Garden, designed by renowned Dutch plantsman Piet Oudolf. Beyond the walls, explore the traditional hall gardens and 'Capability' Brown parkland, offering beautiful walks and scenic views.

Malton, North Yorkshire YO17 8NG | 01944 759111 | scampston.co.uk

National Trust Images/David Levenson

3 NYMANS

Nymans is celebrated for its spring colour. This spring a collection of 6,000 newly planted bulbs will bloom around the recently conserved statue of Flora, Roman goddess of flowers. Find snowdrops among bulbs planted throughout the garden, while the sweet smell of daphne hangs in the air.

West Sussex RH17 6EB | 01444 405250 | nationaltrust.org.uk/nymans

4 CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY BOTANIC GARDEN

Cambridge University Botanic Garden is one of the largest University-owned botanic gardens in the world. Based in the centre of Cambridge, it offers year-round inspiration with over 8,000 species from all over the world, spread over 40 acres of beautiful gardens and glasshouses.

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6 SYON HOUSE & GARDENS

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Brentford, Middlesex TW8 8JF | 020 8560 0882 | syonpark.co.uk

7 EMMETTS GARDEN

This Edwardian hillside garden begins spring with a display of tulips and cherry tree blossoms followed by rhododendrons and banks of bluebells. The formal Rose Garden and delightful Rock Garden are a must in summer, with a cacophony of colour and views of the weald of Kent in autumn.

Sevenoaks, Kent TN14 6BA | 01732 868381 | nationaltrust.org.uk/emmetts-garden

8 CHARTWELL

The historic garden of Winston Churchill comes to life in spring with daffodils, magnolias and bluebells, followed in June by wisteria, irises and roses of pinks and yellows. From September the Walled Garden emerges with dahlias that lead to harvest displays of apples and pumpkins in autumn.

Westerham, Kent TN16 1PS | 01732 868381 | nationaltrust.org.uk/chartwell

9 HIGH BEECHES WOODLAND AND WATER GARDEN

27 acres of the Sussex Weald have been sensitively planted with many rare trees and shrubs to create a unique woodland and water garden. In early summer the bluebell carpeted glades are filled with the beauty and scent of many azaleas and autumn brings a spectacular display of autumn colour.

Handcross, West Sussex RH17 6HQ | 01444 400589 | highbeeches.com

Image: Clare Forbes

10 YORK GATE, ONE OF PERENNIAL'S GARDENS

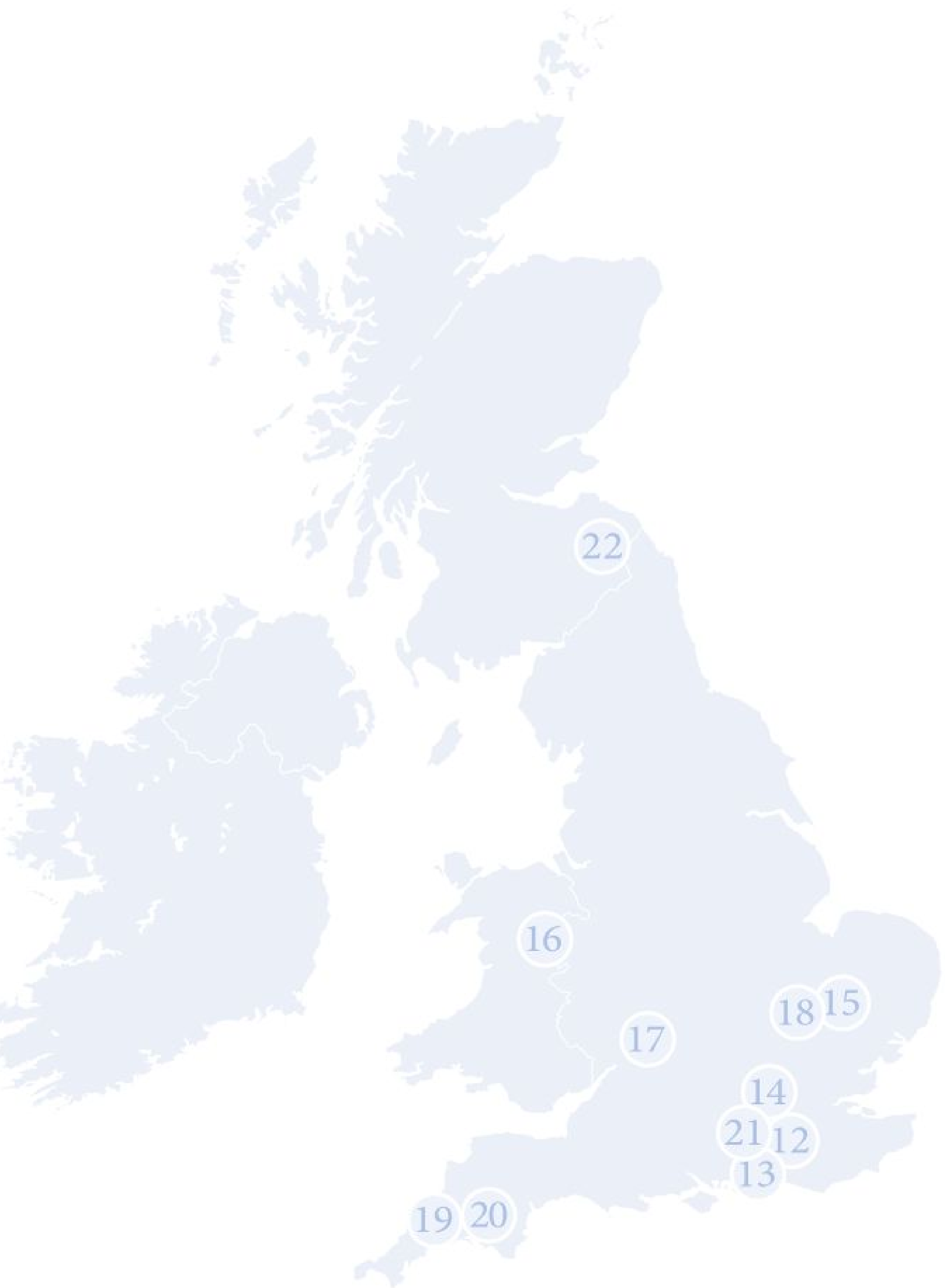
Join us for the grand reopening of York Gate in April 2020. Winding through new garden rooms, you will enter the beautiful one-acre jewel with something new to discover around every corner. Plus, the Wildflower Meadow is a thriving addition to the garden.

Back Church Lane, Leeds, West Yorkshire LS16 8DW | 0113 267824 | yorkgate.org.uk

11 TREMENHEERE SCULPTURE GARDENS

Tremenheere Sculpture Gardens' dramatic landscape, combined with large-scale sub-tropical planting, provides the backdrop to evolving artwork from international artists. Situated in a beautiful valley, overlooking St Michael's Mount, with woods and a stream, there is also a gallery, shop, nursery and restaurant.

Gulval, Penzance, Cornwall TR20 8YL | 01736 448089 | tremenheere.co.uk



12

WAKEHURST

Kew's wild botanic garden in Sussex, has more than 500 acres of ornamental gardens, woodlands and a nature reserve. Beautiful whatever the season, discover the phytogeographic planting that makes Wakehurst so unique, or visit the Millennium Seed Bank, where you can see Kew Science at work.

Haywards Heath, Sussex RH17 6TN | 01444 894066 | kew.org/wakehurst

Image: Brighton Pictures

13

ARUNDEL CASTLE

The Walled Gardens at Arundel Castle are a celebration of innovative design and horticulture. One of England's finest stately homes, Arundel Castle is the ancestral home of the Dukes of Norfolk and has commanded the striking landscape of the Sussex Downs for almost a thousand years.

Arundel, West Sussex BN18 9AB | 01903 882173 | arundelcastle.org

14

CHELSEA PHYSIC GARDEN

Explore a unique collection of around 5,000 species at London's oldest botanic garden, situated in the heart of Chelsea. Highlights include the Garden of Medicinal Plants, World Woodland Garden, the Garden of Edible & Useful Plants, spectacular Victorian glasshouses and Europe's oldest rock garden.

Chelsea, London SW3 4HS | 020 7352 5646 | chelseaphysicgarden.co.uk

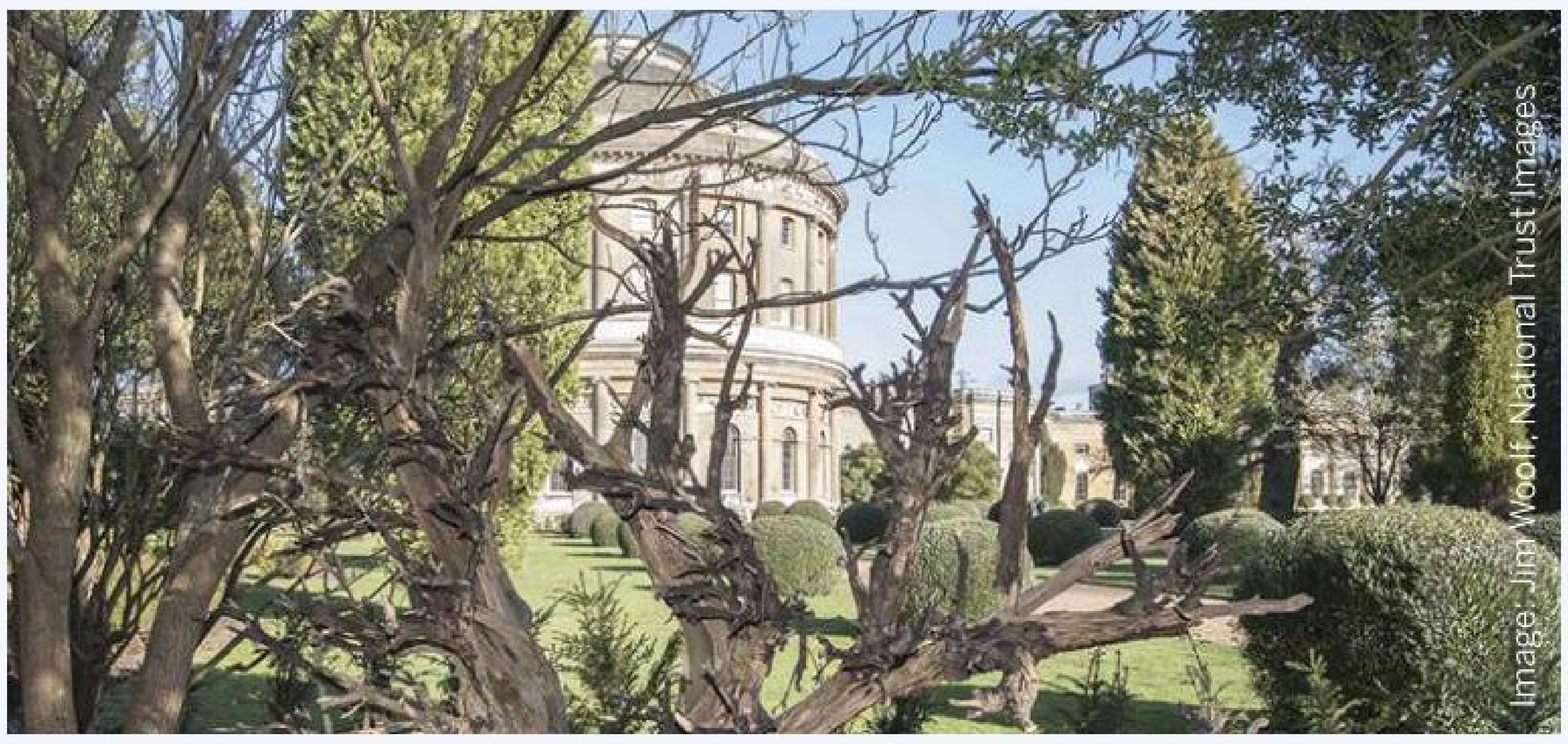


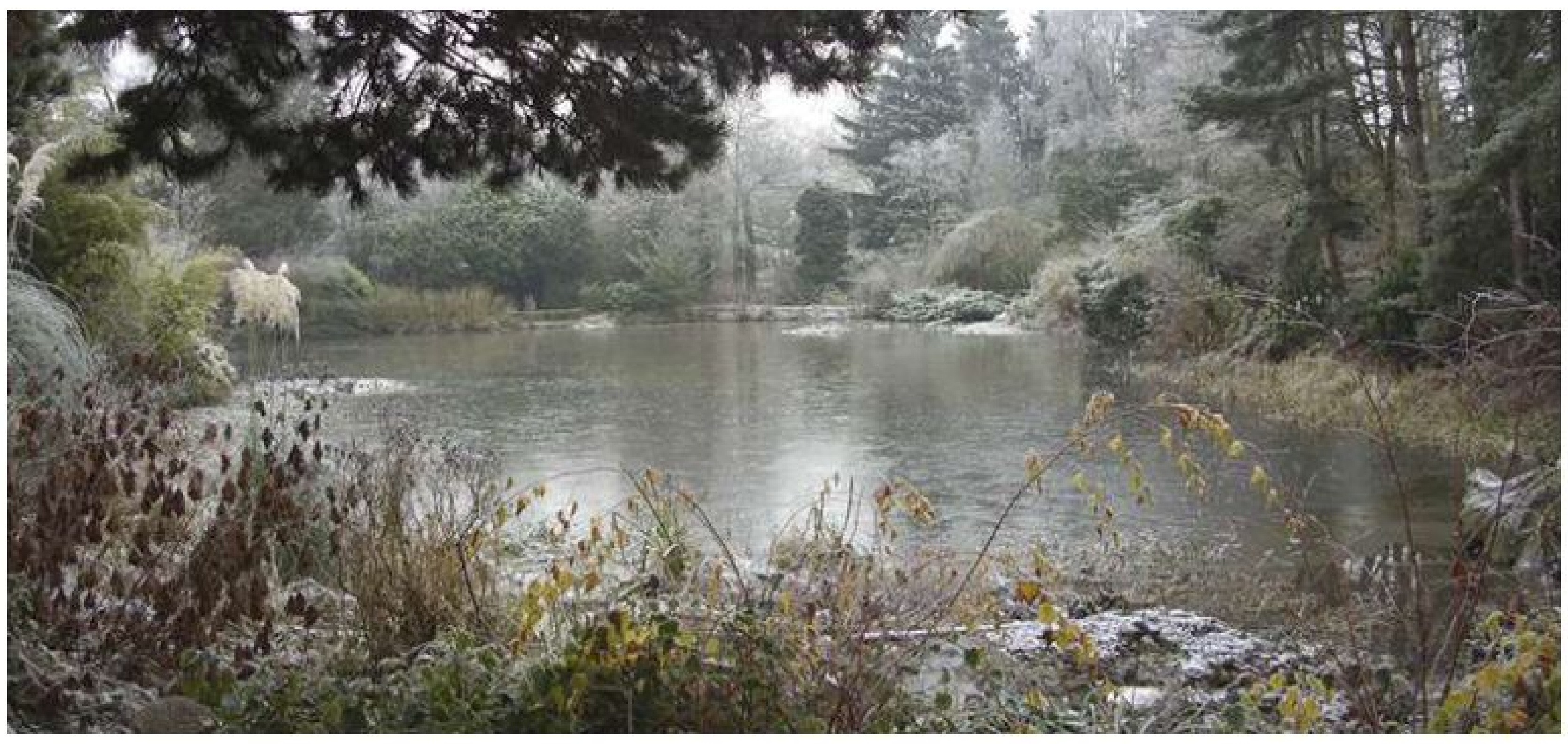
Image: Jim Woolf; National Trust Images

15

ICKWORTH

Ickworth sits within a historic evergreen landscape, highlighted by its Italianate Garden with a delicate planting palette and contrasting with a gothic Victorian Stumpery. The working kitchen Walled Garden has a classical summerhouse with sweeping lawns and tranquil views across the canal lake.

Suffolk IP29 5QE | ickworth@nationaltrust.org.uk | nationaltrust.org.uk/ickworth



16

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Welshpool, Powys SY21 9JD | 01938 555 145 | dinglenurseryandgarden.co.uk

17 SUDELEY CASTLE & GARDENS

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Winchcombe GL54 5JD | 01242 604244 | sudeleycastle.co.uk

18 ANGLESEY ABBEY

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Cambridgeshire CB25 9EJ | 01223 810080 | nationaltrust.org.uk/AngleseyAbbey

19 LANHYDROCK

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Bodmin, Cornwall PL30 5AD | 01208 265950 | nationaltrust.org.uk/lanhydrock

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Harford, Ivybridge, Devon PL21 0JF | 01752 691749 | lukesland.co.uk

Image: Trevor Sims

21 PARHAM HOUSE & GARDENS

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Pulborough, West Sussex RH20 4HS | 01903 742 021 | parhaminsussex.co.uk

22 FLOORS CASTLE & GARDENS

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Roxburghe Estates, Kelso TD5 7SF | 01573 227675 | floorscastle.com

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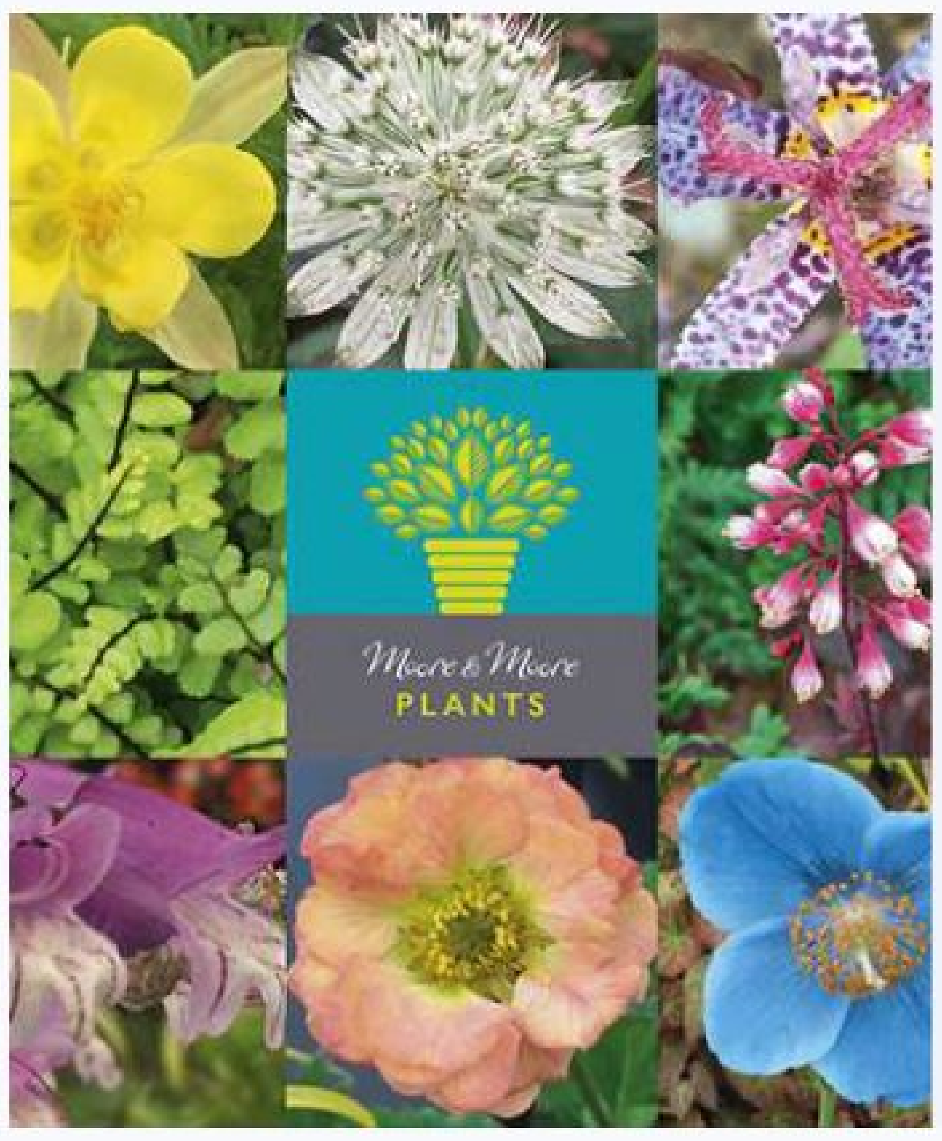

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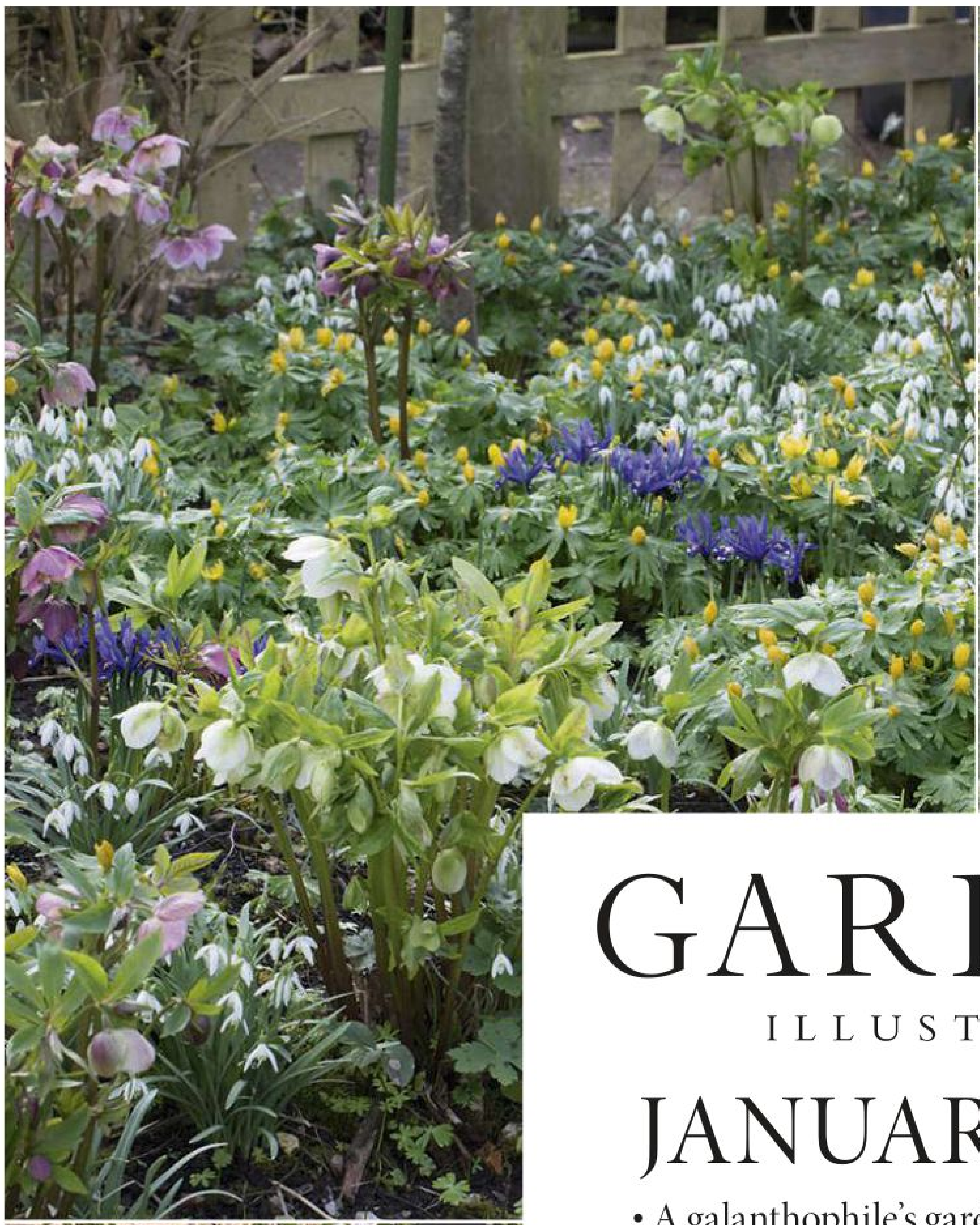

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HOUSEPLANTS

Peperomia

Although small, peperomias are easy-going houseplants that offer a plethora of foliage textures

WORDS JANE PERRONE ILLUSTRATION PATRICK MORGAN

'Peperomias are not wildly thrilling, but they do have a certain flair,' writes Tovah Martin in her book *The Unexpected Houseplant*. Talk about damning with faint praise. She does have a point. Peperomias lack the imposing physicality of a 3m *Monstera deliciosa* embracing a moss pole, or the peacock patterning of a colourful *Calathea*, but I adore them for the sheer variety of leaf textures and for their diminutive size. For those without floor space for expansive specimens, peperomias are compact enough to house a sizeable collection on a modest shelving unit or windowsill.

Sally Williams, who holds the National Collection of Peperomia, has a plant room packed with 500 peperomias to tend while her Peak District garden is hidden under a freezing, white blanket of snow. There are familiars, such as the radiator plant (*P. caperata*), which has crinkled leaves like toes after a long bath, and the watermelon peperomia (*P. argyreia*) with heart-shaped glossy leaves draped in silver stripes, but I'm drawn to some rarities, too. One with foliage the colour and texture of toad skin is labelled *P. hutchisonii*, while lifting a misty bell jar reveals a mass of minute leaves strung on the thread-like stems of *P. bangroana*.

Sally's collection demonstrates the diversity and scale of the *Peperomia* clan. Attempt to discover something seemingly simple, such as how many species are in the genus, and the answer varies from 1,300 to 1,600. Matt Candeias, a botanist and fellow *Peperomia* lover, tells me that *Peperomia* is an ancient group of plants that has evolved to thrive in a wide range of environments around the world, with concentrations in Central and South America and in Africa. Why does all this matter to you and me, tending a cluster of watermelon leaves or untangling the stems of a string of turtles (*P. prostrata*)? Finding out about where your *Peperomia* hails from helps inform how you care for it.

The vast majority of peperomias you'll find unhelpfully labelled merely as 'foliage plant' in your local supermarket or DIY store grow as epiphytes in rainforests, clinging to clefts in a tree where they enjoy humid air and dappled light. These – including rosette types, such as the watermelon peperomia, and trailers, such as the cupid peperomia (*P. nitida*) – have modest rootballs and store water in their fleshy stems and leaves. Root rot is the peperomia's number one enemy: know this, and you'll find them among the most easy-going and undemanding houseplants you can grow.

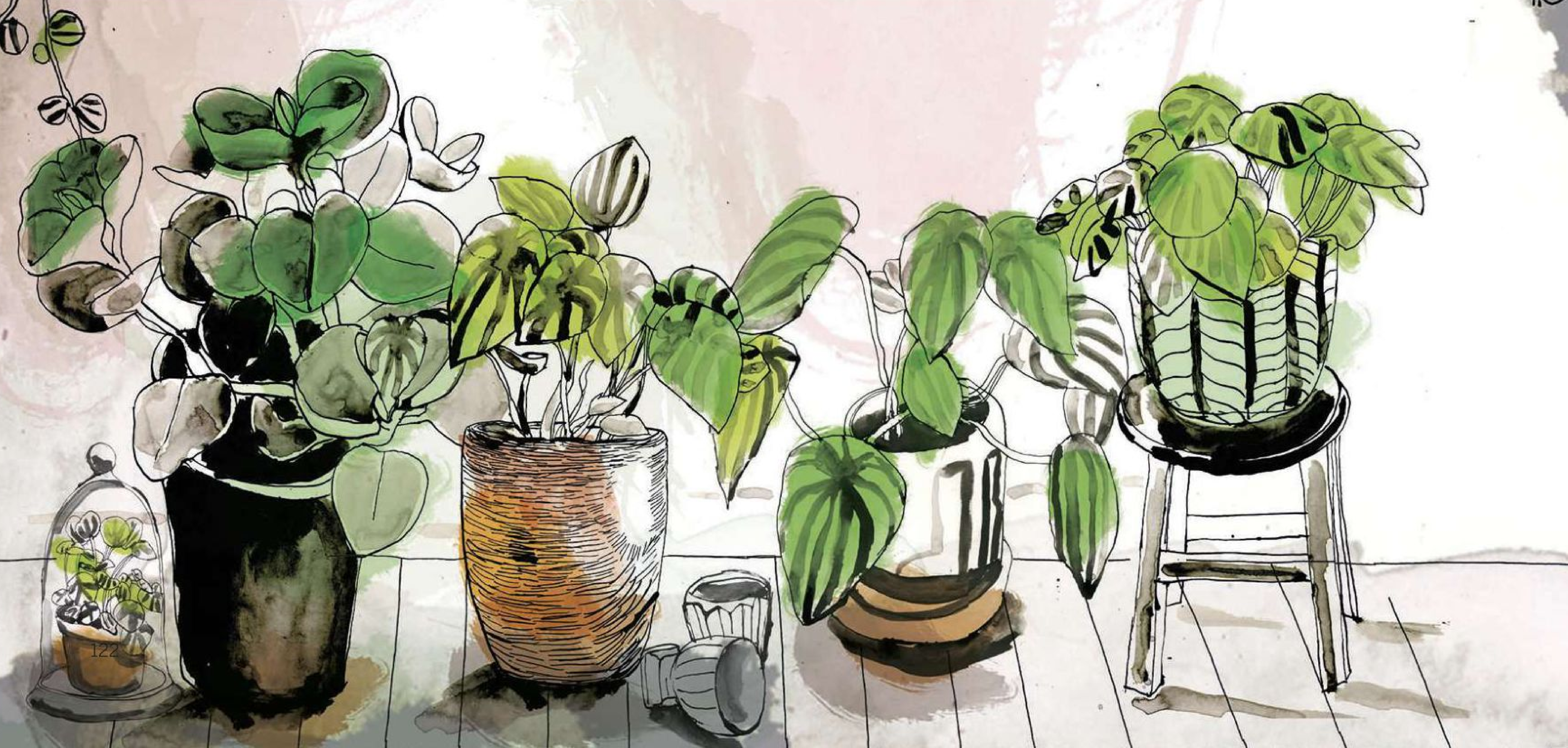
Sally raises her plants in terracotta pots, planted in an airy mix of two parts peat-free, general-purpose potting mix, one part orchid bark and one part perlite, and keeps the air moist by misting – watering just once a month. Succulent species, such as *P. columella, P. ferreyrae* and the toadlike *P. hutchisonii*, generally hail from high altitudes in South America, particularly Peru, adapting to arid conditions and dry air by folding their leaves in half like a taco when water is in short supply: these prefer an even more free-draining, gritty mix and will thrive in a sunny, south-facing window. Rare trailing species, such as *P. bangroana,* require really high humidity and do best creeping around in a shady, sealed terrarium.

Propagation

The key to successful *Peperomia* propagation is to know whether your specimen will root from a section of stem, a leaf petiole cutting or even, miraculously – from a section of leaf. The general rule is that rosette-forming types will propagate from a leaf petiole cutting, while trailing peperomias will grow roots from a length of stem.

Sally's technique provides the high humidity that peperomias enjoy. Take a clear plastic pot with a tight fitting lid – a recycled hummus pot is ideal. Place a trickle of water so the bottom is just covered and then add the leaf or section of stem, curling it around the edges of the pot if necessary. Place the lid on and leave on a bright windowsill out of direct sun. Check every week until roots and shoots have appeared, then pot up into gritty compost. This method works for most peperomias except succulent types such as *P. columella*, which can be rooted straight into gritty compost instead. □

Jane Perrone is a garden writer and houseplant enthusiast



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